FEBRUARY 20th ISSUE, 1926
VOL. LVII No. 2

ADVENTURE

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FEBRUARY
20th
1926
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PUBLISHED
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Adventure

Leonard H. Nason
W. Townend
T. S. Stribling
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Alan LeMay
Clements Ripley
George E. Holt
William Westrup
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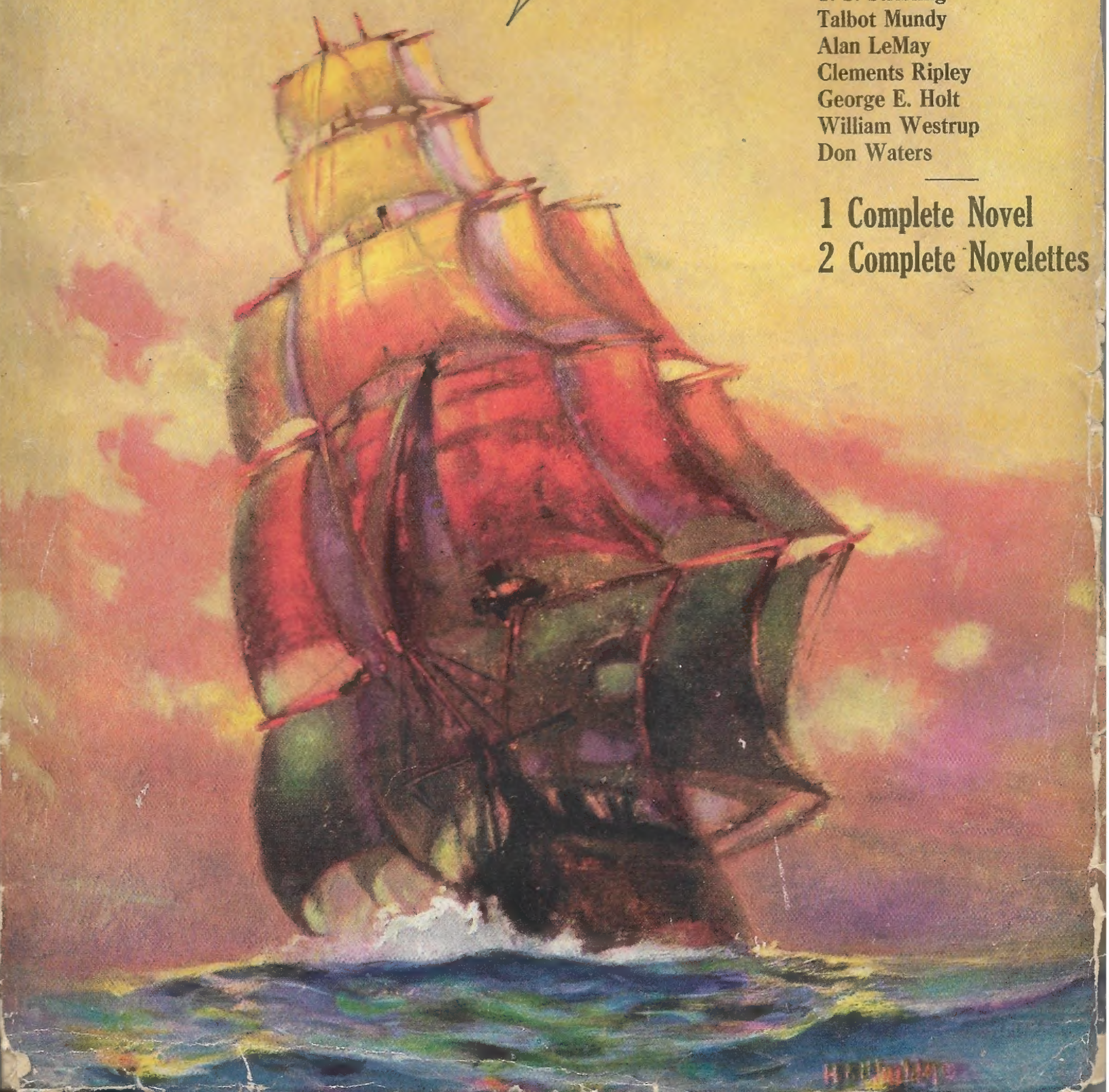
2 Complete Novelettes



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He's making $6500 a year now

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Volume 57
Number 2

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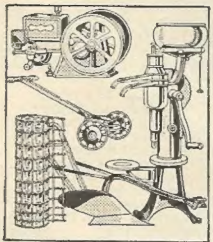

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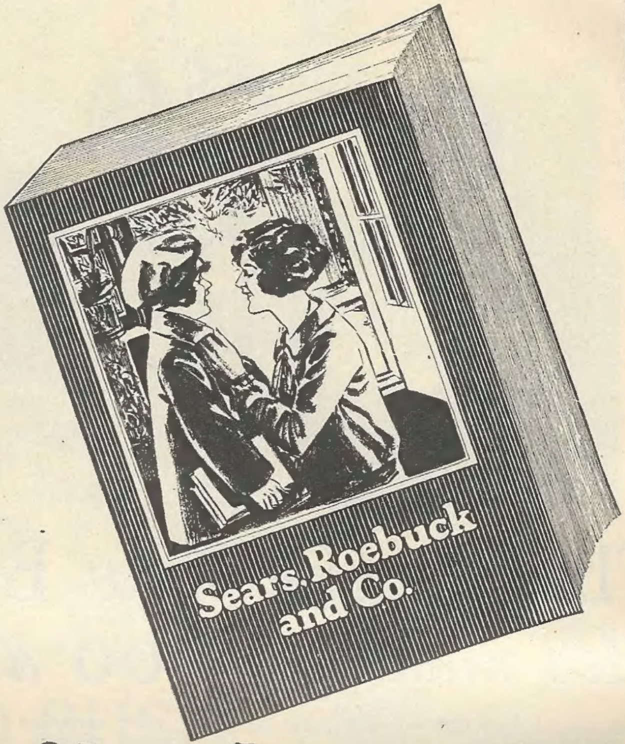
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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Headings . . . . **Walter Baumhofer**

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AFTER twenty years of peace with Canada and the Indian tribes of the Eastern States, the English subjects who were trying to grub a living from the stubby clearings throughout the districts of Maine, Massachusetts and New York were again called to arms by Col. William Johnson to launch another campaign against Quebec. "LOG CABIN MEN," a five-part story by Hugh Pendexter, will begin in the next issue.

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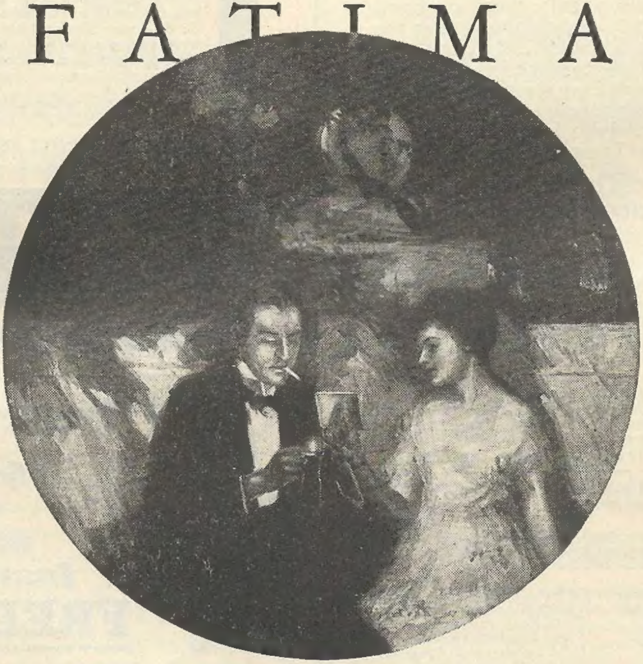

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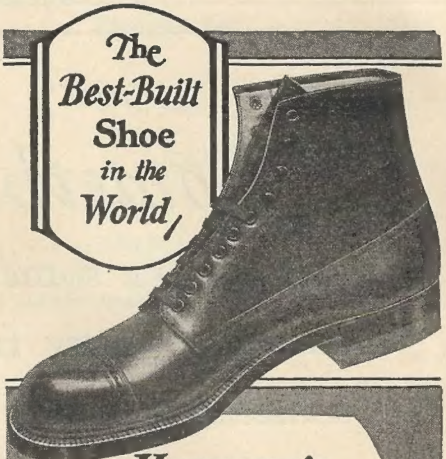
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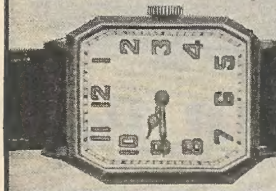

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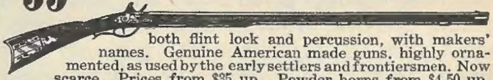

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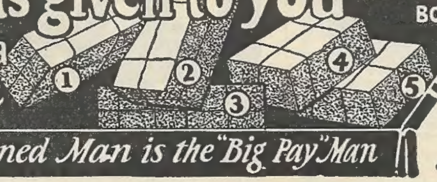

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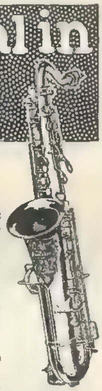

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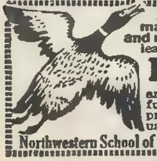

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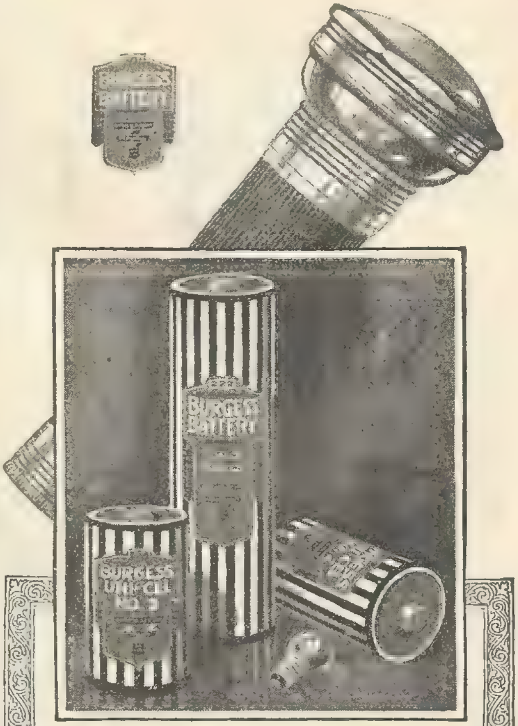

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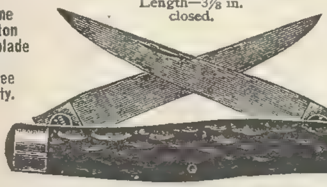

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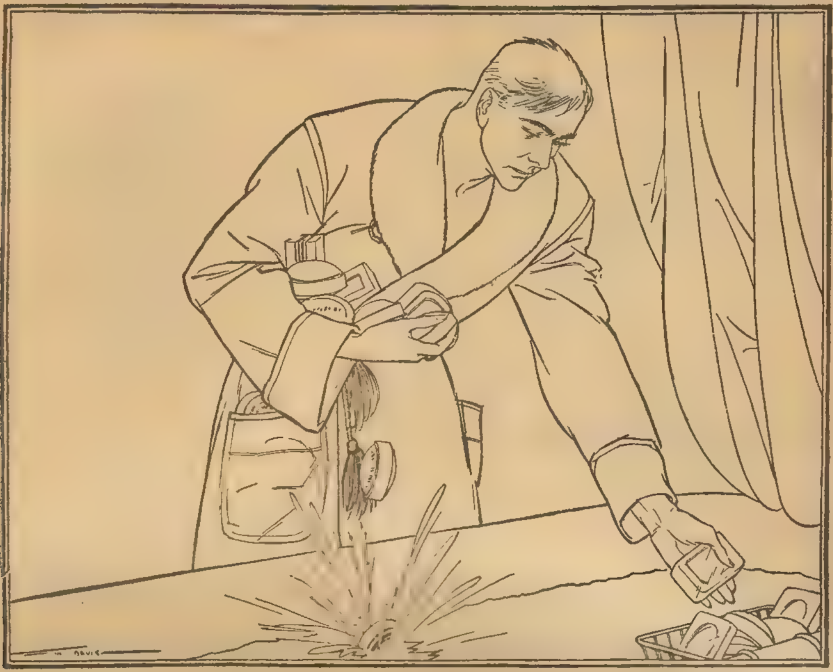

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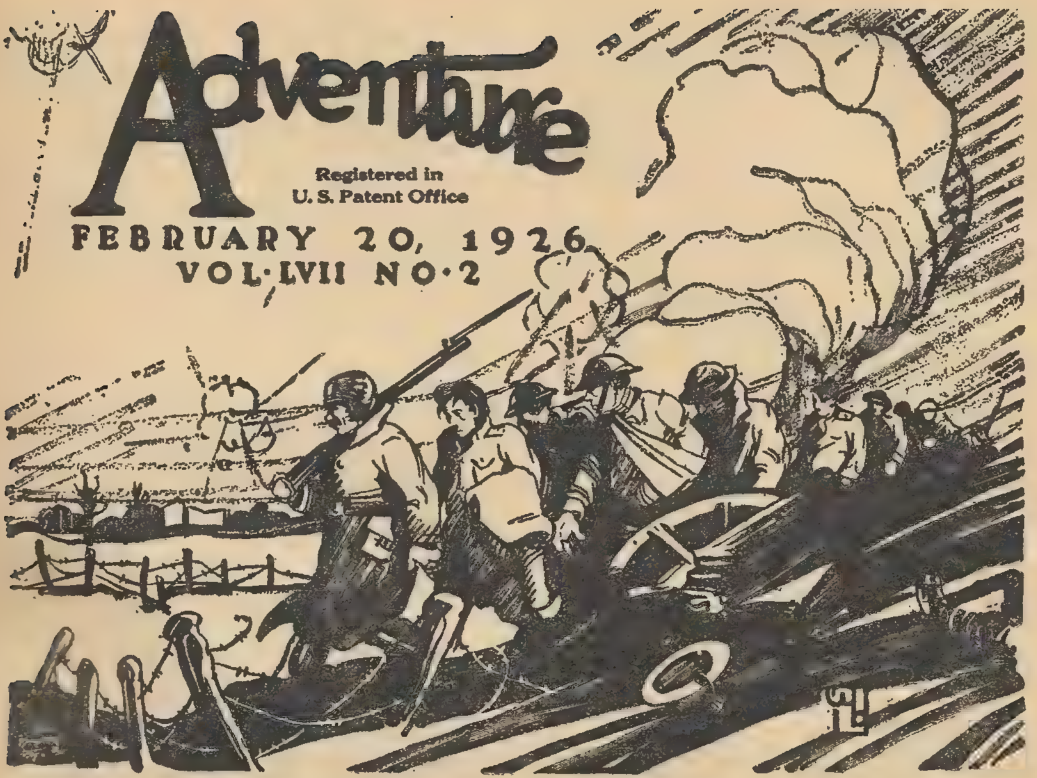

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A MATTER of BUSINESS

A Complete Novel

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IN THE end of what had once been a trench eight men stood gloomily, staring with baffled, angry eyes into the dense fog that surrounded them. The fog was not really fog, but smoke, and from the smoke came sounds as of gigantic bowling alleys, all going in full swing.

The eight did not converse. They were all strangers to each other, men of different organizations that had drifted into this backwater one by one, bits of wreckage from the storm that was raging all around, a storm where the rush of shells took the place of wind and machine-gun bullets and junks of steel, the place of rain. For lightning there was the faint pink flash of shell bursts against the smoke. A battle was toward.

The Germans, whose morale was gone, who were sending young boys to the front, who were cowards anyway, who had no food had staged a drive, a big push, and this drive in its first day had gone twenty-five kilometers, which is a good walk for any man in peace time. And now, on the morning of the second day, it was likely to go another twenty-five. Behind this smoke and this noise and the flashes of near-by shells was the German army, and the men in the trench waited for it to appear.

In the far end of the bit of trench was the shattered entrance to a dugout. The dugout itself had been caved in, but the doorway was still partly intact; two uprights, a crosspiece and some twisted pieces of corrugated iron, all punctured with shell fragments. A torn and filthy blanket, so plastered with mud that its original color was invisible, hung across the doorway, its untidy folds dragging in the dirt of the trench floor. This blanket, for all it was heavy with caked mud and its bottom folds buried in the churned-up earth, was seen to tremble with the shock of near-by shell

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bursts and was seen to vibrate exceedingly at the sound of distant shouting. The men who noticed the behavior of the blanket paid it no attention. They had other things on their minds. But had one of the men in the trench thought fit to go over to that old doorway that led to nowhere and to examine that bedraggled blanket, he would have seen a dirty hand clutch the blanket and he would have heard, at those times when the blanket shook, faint gasps and the tiny click of teeth rattling.

Suddenly the men in the trench stood up. Other men had appeared, men in gray, with huge bucket-like helmets. The newcomers seemed to rise from the ground. The place was instantly alive with them. Before the trench appeared at least a hundred, and long lines of them stretched away into the smoke. They advanced, firing from the hip with their rifles as they marched. The men in the trench gasped. What availed resistance against such numbers? What good would it do to kill a man, or five or ten out of that horde? The Germans drew nearer and began to fire at the men in the trench. The men replied, their rifles cracking feebly. One was hit and another searched his pockets for ammunition.

"Hello, there," called a voice, a voice with an American accent. "Give up, boys, give up. Don't make fools of yourselves."

An officer, young, slim and handsome appeared, his buttons and the gold of his shoulder straps gleaming.

"Well, cut out shootin' at us," cried one of the men in the trench.

"Throw down your guns," shouted the officer, and at the same time gave an order in German. One by one the men in the trench sullenly threw down their rifles, the Germans poured over the shattered parapet and down into the trench, where they removed their prisoners' belts and equipment and gathered up the rifles. A German with a Red Cross brassard proceeded to dress the wounded man's arm. The officer lighted a cigaret and looked about him. Suddenly his gaze became fixed. At the far end of the trench was the broken doorway and the muddy blanket, and this blanket had just trembled the slightest bit. The tiny movement had caught the officer's eye and he whispered to one of his men. The German soldier, bayonet advanced, went cautiously along the trench, two of his comrades behind him with up-lifted grenades. Near the doorway the men with the grenades stopped and the other German went forward alone. At the doorway he halted and lifted the blanket with the point of his bayonet.

Under the doorway, outlined against a background of yellow mud, broken boards and twisted sheet iron, sat a small, very shrinking man. He held a rifle upright between his knees, but he made no move to use it. Before the menace of the German soldier, the bayonet point not a foot from his breast and the two soldiers in the background with their grenades ready to hurl, the little man seemed to wither and melt.

"Oy!" said he faintly. The German soldier grunted and, lowering his bayonet, reached in and twitched away the little man's rifle with his free hand. Then he seized the breast of the little man's coat and dragged him into the trench.

"Hi!" shrieked the little man. "Loafer!" His fist banged against the German's nose, blood spouted, the German cursed, and he and his comrades moved forward to slay the little man. The officer stepped between.

"Forward!" said he in German. "Leave the prisoners to me."

THE Germans obediently climbed out of the trench and went on, and the officer, calmly smoking his cigaret, looked curiously at the eight prisoners he had taken in the trench, then at the ninth one who had been behind the blanket. The eight looked at the ground and bit their lips. The ninth cleared his wrists of his over-long sleeves, removed his helmet and wiped his brow, although the morning was not warm.

His hair was short and curly, inclined to red in color, and his face bore the characteristics of that race of which Solomon, king of kings, was one, and David, who slew Goliath, another. This descendant of the race of Solomon and David looked around, saw that the eight men were alone with the German officer and that there were no other Germans in sight. He swallowed several times, then gathering the skirt of his overcoat in one hand, he started to walk away, as if he had very urgent business somewhere.

"Here," called the German officer, "where are you going?"

"I got to go home," said the little man, "I ain't doing no good here."

"Wait a while," said the officer, "I want you to meet some of my friends."

The little man paid no attention, but continued his ascent of the shattered parapet. At the top he turned and walked down again. The officer was seen to smile. From the top of that parapet a man could see almost a thousand Germans, all armed and all very ugly looking. Some more Germans appeared on the edge of the trench—two officers, older and thinner than the one who had captured the Americans. The young officer saluted, and one of the older ones put his monocle in his eye to look at the prisoners. He spoke in German to the young officer.

"What's your regiment?" the latter asked the wounded American.

"You'll never know," said the wounded man sullenly.

This reply, which was one of the com*monest come-backs of the A. E. F., not only* made the prisoners grin in spite of themselves, but the officer, too. He picked up the belts the men had discarded, examined the haversacks and wrote down what he found. He was reading the regimental numbers stamped thereon. The older officers appeared pleased with what the younger told them. Here were prisoners from three different branches of the service and from two separate divisions. This would indicate demoralization and intermingling of units on the part of the defending forces.

"Now, then," said the young officer, "your names, and then we'll be done." He turned to the little man with the curved nose. "What's yours?"

"Sheehan," said the little man, "Mike Sheehan."

"You?" asked the officer of the next man.

The man looked sourly at the little man, glared at the officer and replied—

"Abey Goldberg."

The prisoners were compelled to laugh.

"I wish we had as fine a map of Munster in the War Office as you've got on your face," remarked the officer. "You Americans haven't got much sense. What do you suppose I care what your names are? It's for the Red Cross so your families will know whether you're dead or not. Show me your dog tags."

The soldiers produced their identification tags, and from the little man's the officer read "Wladichesnikov."

"Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" asked the officer.

"Sheehan is my name," said the little man.

"What do you mean?" asked the officer, "isn't this your tag?"

"Yes," replied the little man, "but it's kind of hard to say, you know, that name, and so I call myself Sheehan. It's good to have a name from Irish. A soldier what has a Yiddish name, they say, 'He is a kike, don't give him nothings,' but a soldier what has the name Sheehan, 'Don't make it no monkey business with him,' they says, 'or gives it a good poke in the nose!' ".

Here one of the old, skinny officers asked what the conversation was all about and, the young officer explaining, they suggested that there was work to be done and that the whole day could not be spent with the first nine prisoners, even if they were Americans. *The officer thereupon hurriedly finished his* task, stepped up on the parapet and waved his arm. Two German soldiers appeared, and to these the young officer entrusted the nine prisoners. Then he and the other two officers hurried after the attacking waves in search of more prisoners to question.

The nine Americans stumbled across the shell-torn field, the wounded man with his arm in a new white sling. They went through a patch of woods, crossed another field and then on to a road. All about them were the German troops, men with reels on their backs, stringing telephone wire; stretcher bearers, picking up wounded; artillerymen digging gun emplacements and carrying ammunition; and on the road and in the farther fields the bodies of the French who had been killed in the previous day's fighting.

The prisoners still walked in utter silence, too miserable to say a word to each other. The little man only seemed to take an interest in his surroundings, for he projected his neck every once in a while from his coat collar and looked with horror at the rows of dead laid out for the trucks to carry away. Once catching the eye of a stolid guard, the little man smiled ingratiatingly, but the guard only replied with a heavy stare.

THE day began to be unpleasantly warm and the men removed their overcoats and walked with them over their arms. It occurred to them that they had had no rest since they had been captured. The guards seemed also to show signs of fatigue, but they did not stop even to catch their breaths. There was a continual flow of troops in the opposite direction, and it is possible that the guards feared the officers with these troops. There may have been an order that prisoners were not allowed to rest. Finally the little man stumbled and fell, the rearmost guard swore in German, the leading guard halted to see what the matter was and the prisoners immediately took to the ditch and sat down. The two guards convened upon the little man in the road and, satisfied that he was still alive, proceeded to try to haul him to his feet by the collar of his blouse.

"Let go," said the little man. "Listen, I am too tired to walk all that ways without a rest. Last night I walked all the way from the railhead, and I ain't had no sleep. It ain't my fault I got captured. I got lost in the dark and the first thing I knew—*boom*, like that. I ain't had nothing to eat. Ow!"

The guard drew back his foot for another kick.

"Hey!" cried the little man. "Lookit! This loafer kicks me! For that I will report you. I ain't a recruit! Lookit on my arm a wound stripe!"

He displayed a sleeve on which was a wound stripe a half inch wider than the regulations provide. The guard stopped with his foot still in air at the sight of that wide band of new gold. This man must be a high officer. If so all the more reason for kicking him.

"Ow!" cried Sheehan. "Don't do that no more. You are breaking my bones."

It was quite plain that he must get up or be kicked to death, but as he rose painfully to his feet, he laid himself open to an attack from the bayonet which drew from him a genuine shriek. The guard chuckled and waved to the other Americans to be on their way.

"You fellars will be witness," cried Sheehan, "you fellars will be witness what he did to me with that bayonet. That ain't no way to treat a surrendered man. I know it my rights. I shouldn't have to walk like this all day. I just come out from hospital where I got wounded. I ain't getting no salary from the Germans I should walk all day with no lunch."

A passing column grinned at the sound of Sheehan's complaints and passed derisive remarks. The other Americans kept their eyes on the ground and clenched their fists helplessly. The shame of their capture weighed heavily upon them. Not so the little man.

"What did I ever do you should give me a raw deal like this after I went and surrendered without putting up no fight nothing? I ain't killed none of you fellars. I just come back from hospital I tell you and I ain't yet fired off my rifle. And then when I go and surrender like a good fellar, you won't even give me a cigaret or something."

Here one of the Americans turned and swore savagely at Sheehan.

"Forget it," said he. "Button your jaw or I'll break it for you!"

"Hah!" cried Sheehan. "You can't make me shut up. I ain't no recruit. I was at the front and wounded while you was still looking it in the paper to see if you was drafted. Lookit if you don't believe it!" He again displayed his wound stripe. "Do you think I should care what—a-ugh!"

The guard here took a hand and his rifle butt shoved between Sheehan's shoulders effectively put an end to the little man's conversation.

The march continued through the rest of the day—across the Vesle, the Aisne-Marne canal and the Aisne. The prisoners suffered from thirst and from their mental depression. The wreckage of the previous day's retreat was ever before their eyes—abandoned wagons, dead horses, dead men, overcoats, rifles, helmets, machine gun ammunition carriers, piles of shell cases, battery after battery of captured guns, all the signs of a disorderly retreat that was fast becoming a rout. The country, too, became sad to look upon as they drew nearer the original front line and came into the ghastly district about Craonne, mile after mile of naked shattered trees, of mud and of the stinking refuse of four years of war.

At sunset they halted behind the ruins of a nameless town, probably Hurtbise or Craonnelle. There was no prison pen, no barbed wire inclosure; just a field, shell holes and bits of stone and broken wood that had been hurled there by shells exploding in the town. In the field were thirty or more prisoners, English and French, and two or three guards with lanterns. Here, with no preliminary, the American prisoners were halted and left to their own devices. They sat down upon blocks of cement and searched their pockets for tobacco.

"Hey," cried Sheehan, "do we eat now or do we got to wait?"

The English regarded him with sad smiles, the French with surprize and his own comrades with disgust. One or two of the latter growled at him to shut up.

"I won't shut up," he replied, "I got to eat sometimes. I ain't made out of iron. What did they capture me for if they ain't going to give me nothing to eat? 'Throw down your arms,' says that officer. First we should have got it in writing that they would give us meals regular. I wish I had that fellar here. I would tell him a thing or maybe a couple."

"What's the matter?" asked a cool voice.

Sheehan swung about and the other prisoners looked up quickly. The slim young officer who had questioned them in the morning had come around the corner of a ruined house and was looking very sternly at Sheehan. If he expected the little man to quail, he was disappointed.

"Oh!" cried Sheehan, "so it's you! Well, I would like to consult with you just a minute. Here me and my friends, we ain't had nothing to eat all day. It says in the book you should feed prisoners of war the same rations what gets it your own troops. I read it while I was on the boat. I know my rights."

"Be calm," said the officer, "we're cooking you a few steaks. Steaks take time to cook, you know. We'll have some food for you in a while."

He lighted a cigaret and went over to question the British prisoners.

THE sun went down behind the wrecked village, outlining the roofless houses and the cold chimneys and glaring redly through the beams of the tileless roofs, like a fire behind the bars of a grate. Some Germans brought on a rusty marmite full of coffee made from chicory and wood and various other substitutes.

"Here's the chow," cried one of the Americans.

All scrambled to their feet and hastened toward the marmite, Sheehan among the first. Here arose a slight difficulty. Some of the prisoners looked anxiously in the direction from whence had come the coffee, as if to see what else was forthcoming in the way of food. There seemed to be nothing. The Germans stood stolidly by the rusty can and the prisoners looked at them sadly. There was unfortunately no one in the company who spoke German, the Germans spoke neither English nor French and it was therefore difficult for the prisoners to demand of the men by the marmite whether they, the prisoners, were to wait for the appearance of more food or to be served the coffee forthwith.

"I'll fix that," said Sheehan, after there had been considerable mutterings among the men. "I'll ask it to my friend, the officer."

The German officer was still in the corner of the field, questioning the English and writing down their answers. Sheehan came up and saluted.

"Are we going to get anything to eat or do we start in on the coffee?" he asked.

The officer surveyed him coldly.

"Where do you think you are?" he asked. "You Americans must begin to realize what war means. Maybe you won't rush into the next one so hurriedly. No, we haven't got any food. You can have a drink of coffee, though."

"We ain't got no cups," cried Sheehan. "Do you want we should drink it with our hands?"

The officer looked down at the ground and then walked in a short circle as if searching for something. Evidently he found what he wanted, in spite of the gloom of twilight. He kicked something in Sheehan's direction. "There," said he, "drink out of that."

Sheehan bent down. Under his hand he felt something hard and picking it up and holding it close to his eyes he found that it was an old tin can, an old beef tin, rusty, dirty and full of ants.

"I ain't going to drink from that!" exclaimed Sheehan. "It ain't clean even."

The officer, however, had turned his back and was writing down the shoulder strap insignia of some Britishers and asking them how long their regiment had been on the lines without relief. Sheehan went raging back to the men by the marmite, but they had already solved the problem of no cups for themselves and were hunting about the ground for the very things that Sheehan had disdained. The little man still expounded shrilly, shaking his thin arm in air.

The German officer finished his questioning and went away, but he paused in passing the can of coffee and pointed out a certain prisoner to the two guards. This prisoner was easily recognized and remembered. At that moment he was addressing a circle of mystified French, shouting:

"That's the kind of a loafer what I can put out of business. I betch you he don't take no more prisoners if I could only tell them what kind of treatment he gives to us. I ain't no trouble hunter, you understand, but if I knew what he would do to me afterwards I would have put up a —— good fight sooner I would surrender. I could have killed maybe six or a dozen them German fellars. I been at the front before. I was in a raid and killed near a hundred. And lookit now what I get for being a good fellar!"

The French, however, by this time had one by one gone away. Some half dozen cans had been found and these, with an old French helmet, were being passed around from one to the other. Sheehan, waiting with breathless impatience for one of his comrades to finish, seized the empty tin and made for the marmite.

"Come," said he. "Service. I ain't had nothing to eat since last night."

The German guard regarded Sheehan fixedly in the light of the lantern and spoke to the man who was serving the coffee. This one snarled at Sheehan.

"I ain't had none," protested Sheehan. "What's eating you? I ain't had none at all. This is my first time around."

The German served another man and the guard jerked his head as a sign to Sheehan to move on.

"What gives it now?" shrieked the little man. "Do I get coffee or not? I tell you I ain't had none! Pig, loafer, I'll get you fired from your job, so quick I will tell the officer! Hey!"

The guard had here made a pass at Sheehan with his bayonet, whereat the latter put a safe distance between himself and the German. Then he turned and faced the guard, trembling with rage. The guard regarded Sheehan calmly, as a policeman might a small boy, and then raised his hand in air and shook it violently in very obvious imitation of Sheehan's gestures when haranguing the French a few minutes before. The guard then gave a very creditable imitation of Sheehan's rather high-pitched voice, then went through the pantomime of eating and ended by waving his finger back and forth in front of his nose. Then he grunted and went back to his post by the coffee bucket.

"There," said one of the Americans, "that means that 'count o' your takin' on an' hollerin' about chow that way, yuh ain't goin' to get none. Serves yuh right."

"Is that so?" said Sheehan. "All right. In the morning I'll see my friend, the officer."

NIGHT fell and the prisoners paced about, unable to sleep, for it was bitter cold and they had no blankets. Three or four guards kept watch over them, herding them within an inclosure marked by four lanterns, one at each corner. The prisoners walked about until they were tired and then huddled together in a mass to keep warm and see if they could not get a little rest. The men on the outside of the mass were cold, and kept trying to get into the middle, and so awakened those already in the center who had managed to doze for a minute or two.

The prisoners suffered terribly. The night seemed endless, the hours dragged, and each hour was colder than the one preceding. The weather did seem to take pity on the unfortunate prisoners, for it did not rain, an unusual thing enough at that season. At last, from sheer exhaustion, the men lapsed into a state of unconsciousness and in the space of a minute or two, it seemed to them, a guard was shaking them by the shoulders. It was already very light, there was a heavy mist, the sun rising and that heaviness in the air that presaged a scorching day, a day of long marches, dusty roads and no water.

The prisoners, hastily aroused, stamped about and stretched their stiffened limbs, moaning with the pain of blood flowing into veins that had been empty all night. The guards began to shove them into a column, four abreast, and less than ten minutes after they had been aroused, the Germans started the party off.

"They're takin' us to chow," said the Americans hopefully.

"I'm glad of that," said Sheehan. "I ain't had nothing to eat now for two days. I ain't built to go without food. It's making me dizzy. So soon as I see it my friend, the officer, I'll tell him what a dirty deal they gave me last night. No coffee, nothing. Which they shouldn't do it to a dog!"

"They're takin' us far enough," muttered the man beside him. "They must have them kitchens clear on the other side of the town."

The other side of the town was reached, but there were no kitchens. They passed the town and set out along the road, going north. The sun climbed higher, burning off the mist, and the dust began to rise. They crossed a river that the British and French said was the Alette, and then it became apparent to all that the day's march had begun and that the prisoners would have no breakfast. The realization of this fact did not come at once, but gradually. Little by little it was forced upon the prisoners, and man after man showed that he had given up hope by muttering a bitter curse or two. They did not show much anger, for anger requires strength, and the men had no desire to waste any of theirs.

"What would happen should a man fall down and not be able to get up?" Sheehan asked the prisoner next to him.

"Try it and see."

"Uh!" said Sheehan.

He looked appraisingly at one of the guards, noting the fact that his rifle had the bayonet fixed and that the bayonet was short, thick, and glittering, with just the suspicion of a sweep to the blade, so that it reminded one of a venomous snake.

"Let's wait," said Sheehan. "Maybe one of them Frogs or Limejuice men falls down first. But if we should fix it up, maybe, and all fall down at once, they wouldn't kill us all, would they?"

"Wouldn't they?" answered the other man darkly.

Sheehan sighed heavily.

The column arrived in another hour or so at a crossroads where a main highway ran north and south and two other smaller roads branched off. The French sign, a huge blackboard with letters in white, was still in place and indicated that the main road was the one from Laon to Fismes. There were more prisoners here in a little triangular field, bordered on two sides by the roads and on the third by a river. The party to which the Americans belonged was turned into this field and allowed to break ranks. They immediately made for the brook to quench their thirst, regardless of how many dead might be in the water farther up.

"I bet we eat here," cried Sheehan hopefully.

"Maybe we could pick up somethin' on the ground," said one of the Americans. "There ought to be some bulley or something in all this junk."

The Americans began to look about. Ammunition, live grenades, both German and French, belts, knapsacks, *gamelles* and bits of rag were scattered thickly about, the debris of every article of equipment that a soldier carried; everything but food. One of the Americans went over to the new group of prisoners and asked them if they had eaten. They shook their heads. They were all French; no Americans or English among them. They were all very sad and downcast and had no remarks to offer. They seemed to take it for granted that they were to be starved to death. At this moment, when all had given up hope, a two-wheeled cart, easily recognizable as having been stolen from some French farmer, appeared, and from this cart, when it had turned off into the field, alighted two unarmed Germans. The prisoners all got to their feet with excited muttering, for the cart was full of bread. No doubt now. The prisoners were to be fed, for the guards gathered by the cart and began to shove the prisoners into line. The line moved forward and the men by the cart began to issue the bread. Those in the line looked eagerly to see what those ahead were getting to eat.

"It ain't much," exclaimed one of the Americans, "it ain't but a little hunk of bread with some kind o' jelly."

"Oh, jelly!" cried Sheehan. "Maybe more comes later."

"Hey, Jock," called another American to one of the British who was tearing away at the bread, "how is it?"

"It's rawten," said the British soldier. "The bread is 'ard an' tough an' the jam is made o' carrots, but ye'd better not be turnin' yer nose up at it. There ain't much fer a 'undred 'ungry men in that cart. If the boche see ye don't like it, they're likely not to give ye none."

Sheehan was about half way down the line. He noticed that there was no attempt made by the Germans to prevent a man getting in line again after he had finished his piece of bread and he began to have hopes of seconds. He shoved forward smacking his lips and peering over men's shoulders and around their backs to see how many separated him from the cart. At last he arrived, the man in front stepped aside and Sheehan was before the cart. One of the guards shoved in front of him. Sheehan moved to one side to pass the guard and the guard likewise moved, keeping always between Sheehan and the cart.

"Hey," cried Sheehan at last, "give it me something to eat. What the —— is the matter with you? I been all through this monkey business last night. It ain't no joke no more."

The guard waved his hand in a gesture to be gone.

"No, I ain't going!" shrieked Sheehan. "I ain't got no time to fool with you. Give me some bread and don't act no more like a jughead than you can help. Do you think I surrendered to have a lot of comedy at meal times? Do I look like I come from the country? Don't let my clothes fool you. These tailors what makes uniforms I wouldn't have in my shop to sweep up the floor. I come from New York and no Berliner pulls nothing on me."

Here the guard swooped swiftly and seizing Sheehan by the slack of his overcoat, hurled him bodily out of the line. The little man arose spitting dirt and wiping his face.

"If I wasn't a gentleman," said the little man, "you couldn't guess what I could call you."

He straightened his helmet, made a few futile brushes with his hand at the mud on his overcoat and looked about, uncertain what to do. He seemed to arrive suddenly at a resolution, for he started off vigorously enough to cross the field. As he arrived at the edge of the road two guards who walked there converged upon him and cried to him to halt.

"Don't point no gun at me," cried Sheehan. "Maybe that thing is loaded and you don't know it. Never point a gun at no one. I knew that when I was a John. I'm going to find the officer what I surrendered to. He should know what a way you treat me. No coffee, no bread, nothing to eat."

"Here, lay off it," protested one of the Americans who had followed Sheehan. He seized the little man's arm and dragged him back into the field. "Them Huns would as soon kill you as not. Listen, now, I'll sneak in the line an' get some seconds, an' then I'll give 'em to you. Keep quiet, now, it won't get you nowheres to holler like that."

THE American turned to put his project into execution, but a wild shout brought him to a halt. The line of men waiting for food seemed strangely agitated, the French tore their hair and the British cursed long and loud. There were no Americans in the line now; they had all been near the head and had already eaten. The line by the cart howled again. The two Germans who had been giving out the bread climbed into the cart, clucked to the horse and drove out to the road, down which they disappeared at a trot.

Sheehan forgot his own hunger in his interest at the intense rage of the French and English. Sheehan finally discovered what had happened. There had been about forty men in line when the bread had suddenly given out. Of this forty perhaps half had not eaten at all. However, the Germans had had a certain amount of bread in the cart, not enough for all the prisoners, as they well knew, but enough for most of them, and when it was gone that was the end of the ration issue. For this reason they had made no attempt to prevent men from getting seconds.

Since there were not enough firsts to go around, there could hardly be any seconds. There was a wild five or ten minutes, and some of the bolder spirits spoke of revolt, seizing and disarming their guards and fighting their way back, but this plan was rejected. The prisoners had but to look about them to see on all the roads marching infantry, *minenwerfer* groups, dragging their guns by a sort of harness about their shoulders, artillery pounding along and the fields full of burial and salvage parties. What chance had they, unarmed, against such numbers? And they were a long way from their own lines. In the midst of the excitement the order was given to set out on the march once more, and there being nothing to do but obey, the column formed again and moved out upon the road.

The heat rapidly became intense and the dust churned up by the traffic on the roads was stifling.

The American canteen is attached to the ammunition belt, a poor system, for if by any chance a man has to get rid of his belt, especially if he is taken prisoner, his canteen and water go with it. The Americans therefore had no water. The French had some, their canteen being worn on a strap separate from the rest of their equipment, and the British had a little, but it was soon used up. The Americans were not offered a drink by their allies, nor did they ask for any. At about this time, the American who had been shot through the arm and who had been growing weaker and weaker, collapsed in the road. The column was halted and at once took to the ditch to rest, while the guards debated what to do. Sheehan, from his place in the ditch, watched with the liveliest interest.

"I bet you they would stick a bayonet in that poor guy," said he.

"Naw," said the other men, "they'll just sling him in the ditch an' leave him. Poor lad, he couldn't sleep last night, his arm hurt so."

"Lookit, comes a Red Cross man," said Sheehan excitedly.

A German soldier with the Red Cross brassard was coming across the fields from the direction of the main road. He knelt by the wounded man, made a hurried examination, and then the guards and the Red Cross man carried the American into the field. The column was started again. Sheehan marched with his chin on his shoulder. The Red Cross man remained with the wounded American, gave him a drink and redressed his wound. At the end of the long stretch of road, where it turned and went out of sight around an old trench system, Sheehan again looked back. An ambulance had halted beside the field and some one, undoubtedly the wounded American was being lifted into it. Sheehan sighed and looked about him furtively.

"What would you think for a deal like that?" he inquired of the man next him. "Yesterday I fell down and all I got was some good kicks. And that man, he falls down and gives it hospitals and everything."

"You better tell 'em the deal is off," said the other man. "Tell 'em you don't want to play bein' prisoner no more and maybe they'll let you go home."

In the afternoon Sheehan threw away his overcoat. This was a foolish thing to do, for he would need it that night, but he had not the strength to walk and carry it, and if he wore it the heat stifled him and the skirts hampered his legs. All that kept him on his feet was the fact that one of the English soldiers who had had no food had fallen and refused to rise, for which he received a half an inch or so of bayonet in his leg. After that the Englishman got up and walked on.

At the halt that night the prisoners were given soup and this time Sheehan received his share. There was enough for all, too, for a wonder, and another dry night allowed them to sleep, which they did in spite of the cold. At breakfast the next morning Sheehan received no coffee, that being all there was to feed the men, and in spite of his bitter complaints and his announcement that he would not march another step until fed, he started out again when the men formed column and set forth, always with the same guards. The day before they had marched north and now they marched south back toward the devastated section again.

Toward noon they crossed a bridge over a small stream, and after passing a causeway through a marsh, halted in a field by a railroad track.

"Here's where we get a ride on a train at last," exclaimed the Americans.

"Oh, now I wish I hadn't thrown away my overcoat," cried Sheehan. "I ain't yet warm from last night, and if we get to riding in trains I will freeze to death."

"There's the cars all right," said another pointing. There was a long row of cars guarded by sentinels on a siding. These cars were closed, and it was impossible to tell what was in them. They were clearly not for the transport of troops.

"I know what's in them cars," said Sheehan suddenly. "Chow. And tonight I know one fellar that gets a feed out of them. I learned it how to steal since I come in the army."

The men lay down on the ground with arms outstretched, waiting for the arrival of food. On the far end of the field were more tracks, and a little fussy engine was switching cars there. This place was evidently a railhead; and a busy one, for trucks came and went continually. There were numerous working parties about, and the work of unloading cars went on diligently. The day was hot, and an unpleasant smell arose from the marsh at the edge of the field. This marsh was not very wide, but it extended down the river bank as far as one could see, and Sheehan thought that if the night should be spent in that field the prisoners would undoubtedly be eaten alive by the mosquitoes.

"Hi!" cried some one suddenly.

Two or three heads came up.

"Hey, look!" said one or two more. The distant sky had suddenly blossomed with black clouds, round balls like tufts of wool.

"There's one of our planes," said Sheehan.

"Where is it, where is it?" cried the men.

They were looking up into the sun and could not see the plane, but the black bursts of shrapnel from the anti-aircraft guns showed them its progress.

Ke-chung! A battery of anti-aircraft guns on the far side of the railroad yard opened fire. The prisoners got to their feet, the field began to hum with excitement. The plane was still invisible. Above the field the faint crack of the shrapnel could be plainly heard, and the men began to look about anxiously for cover, because a shrapnel ball falling from a height of a few thousand feet acquired considerable velocity.

"There he is!" cried several at once. Then a wild shout gave evidence of the general discovery of the aeroplane. It was far, far up in the blue heavens, a tiny speck of white, a faint spark of something. As the plane would swing or change direction, the sun would flash from the surface of its wings and this pale flash was the only sign the men on the ground had of their comrade in arms overhead.

THE plane continued to hover above the railhead. It was too high to be taking photographs; it was alone and hence not a bomber, and it was too far behind the lines to be an artillery contact plane. Perhaps it was just some wild aviator, hanging around looking for a fight and a chance to shoot down a German plane or two. Suddenly the plane gave a dip and was seen to shoot like an arrow toward the ground. The Germans howled in triumph and the prisoners in consternation. The roar of the motor became audible, then the long tearing sound of the plane's machine-gun. The German working parties began to melt, going into ditches, under cars, and climbing into trucks.

Rip! Rrrrrrrrip went the machine-gun. The plane was quite near now, and the anti-aircraft guns barked in frenzy. *Bang!* A cloud of black dirty smoke arose from the far side of the railroad yard. *Blung!* A freight car erupted a shower of splinters. *Bang!* Beside that fussy engine a high bush seemed to bloom. The bush instantly grew into a tall tree of greasy smoke that slowly dispersed. The prisoners looked back at the plane. It was climbing once more with terrific speed, and the anti-aircraft gunners frantically elevated their guns again. The plane was lost in a group of shrapnel bursts, emerged on the other side and disappeared. A low murmur, and then a sudden hurried chorus of excited voices made every one, prisoners and guards, look around.

There seemed to be no cause for excitement, no one had been hit by the bombs and the freight car that had been demolished had been empty.

The German working parties, however, were rapidly dispersing. The men crawled from under the cars where they had taken refuge, others threw down their tools and ran at their best speed for the river. The trucks started to go away as fast as they could, but too slowly for some of the men in them, who jumped out and ran in their turn for the river to shelter themselves under the bridge.

"Lookit the switch engine!" cried Sheehan.

The little fussy engine that had panted and shrieked and hissed at the far end of the yard was now rushing with great shaking and rattling toward the end of the field occupied by the prisoners. Steam spouted from its exhausts, and the stack coughed smoke and sparks. The Germans, guards, truck drivers, workers and miscellanies continued to go away, faster and faster, throwing away rifles, shovels, anything that they had in their hands. Their cries of consternation swelled higher.

The engine took a switch and nearly leaped the tracks entirely. It shot off toward the left hand corner of the yard where the cars were that the prisoners had thought were for them. The sentries who had guarded these cars were running with outstretched hands, running as men do from the shadow of death. They cried something hoarsely. The Germans on guard over the prisoners stood not upon the order of their going when they heard what their comrades said. Some of the French or the English perhaps understood German and repeated what the guards had called to each other. In the midst of all this clamor and excitement, during which the Americans stood aghast and dumfounded, the little engine swung sharply to the left on to the siding where the line of cars stood.

Crash! Two, three seconds of breathless silence. *Blam!* There was a brilliant flash, then the sky seemed to fall, and the earth rise up to meet it. The sky was shut out by clouds of smoke, dust rose in billows, and through it all was the heavy thunder of explosions. Pieces of metal buzzed and whined through the air. Most of the prisoners threw themselves on the ground to escape the flying fragments, but a few, heedless of their danger, ran blindly through the smoke, their only thought to escape. Among these few was Sheehan. He galloped across the field, lay down at a particularly loud explosion, leaped up and continued to run. He was heading for the bridge, but mistook the direction and found himself on the edge of a bank some distance downstream. Below him and on both sides stretched the marsh, a hundred yards or more wide, and beyond the river. Sheehan leaped down, landed up to his knees in muck, and began to struggle toward the river with some vague idea of swimming it.

The mud of the marsh was too deep, though, and after Sheehan had found himself up to his waist, and still a long way from the water, he gave up and decided to stay where he was. This, however, was itself dangerous, for he sank deeper and deeper every second. He turned then and struggled back away, where the mud was not so deep and found that he had firm ground underfoot. Here he stopped and sheltered himself among the rushes. The mosquitoes rose in clouds about him, but he plastered his face with mud and kept his hands under the surface. Ashore he could hear the confused cries and the sound of roaring motors, but there were no further explosions. Sheehan slunk deeper into the mud and rushes, for by the sound the whole German army was gathering at the spot.

It was true that there was a great rush to the spot—the curious to see what had happened, a large force of doctors and medical men to look after the injured and a considerable force of infantry, for the first thought of the German officers when they heard the explosion was that the prisoners would scatter to the four winds like quail.

Among the motor cars that thronged the road was a large one with the Imperial Arms on the door, and from the back seat of this car, before it had even come to a halt, leaped the slender officer who spoke English with an American accent. The place was still thick with smoke from the burning wreckage, a great many dead and wounded lay about and in a corner of the field some German soldiers were gathering the scattered prisoners. The slim officer went to these at once, but after a searching examination turned away. He inspected all the dead in sight, went back and looked at another group that had been rounded up and then called a passing *feldwebel* to him.

"Sergeant," said the officer, "take half a dozen men and search this field thoroughly. I'm looking for an American prisoner, a little man, with curly red hair. If he is dead, show me his body. There are few Americans here, and this one is not hard to recognize. Find me him, dead or alive."

THE sergeant gathered a party and searched high and low. Later that afternoon a census of the prisoners was taken. Some had been killed by the explosion, a good many were wounded, two of whom were Americans, but the rest were all accounted for save five—three Americans, one Frenchman, and one Englishman, and among the three Americans was the little red-headed man. At this news the slim officer cursed long and deeply.

"Find them!" he directed. "I don't care how many men it takes, search me that marsh and those woods and all the fields, dig up that wreckage, look under the bridge. A month's leave to the man that finds me that little Jew."

And because this slim officer was known to be a member of the general staff and to have considerable authority, the German soldiers immediately went about a thorough search of all the surrounding country. They left no stone unturned, in fact they turned them several times, they dug up the wreckage—an easy task, for there was nothing left of the train but the car-trucks, and when night fell continued their search with lanterns. Mounted patrols scoured the roads. The Frenchman was retaken in a patch of woods and the Englishman was discovered in the same place, dead of a wound in the back. At midnight the search was abandoned, for all were agreed that the three Americans must have been blown to bits by the explosion. As for any one being in the marsh, that was impossible. The mosquitoes had been so thick that the guards had not been able to more than approach the edge. To think of any one staying there was absurd. The searchers reported, however, that they had thoroughly combed the rushes and that there had been no one in them.

Sheehan crouched in the stinking mud until dark. He heard the voices of the Germans in the field, gathering the wounded; he could catch glimpses through the reeds of search parties on the farther bank; he heard ambulances rolling over the bridge, but no one came near his hiding place. The mosquitoes ate their fill of him. In spite of the mud that he kept daubing on face and neck, the humming pests found places to shove their stingers, especially about his eyelids, which soon began to swell and render sight difficult. After the sun went down, between the darkness and his swollen eyelids, he was very nearly blind. He decided, however, that he must make his way out of the swamp, or he would very likely die there, for what with the chill of the night and the wet mud and the fact that he had had no food for so long, he began to feel himself rapidly weaken.

"Oy!" he gasped, "I can't never swim that river now!"

He tried crawling parallel with the bank, but lost his direction immediately and, after five minutes' terrible labor, fell into deep water and nearly drowned before he could seize some reeds and drag himself back to firmer mud again.

"I guess we take stock a while," he panted to himself. "I begin to think I better file bankruptcy papers."

He was cold, wet, blind, hungry, thirsty, and tired. The river was behind and a field full of Germans in front. And supposing he did live until morning, he was two days' march from his own lines.

"Two days?" he repeated aloud. "And if the Germans should be advancing all the time, maybe they are in Paris already. No, I ain't got no luck. Better I should go back and give myself up and maybe get some sleep. It won't be no fun to stay in the mud awake and eat by mosquitoes all night and then march again all next day."

He turned and began to flounder back toward where he thought the field was, but instead of the low shore that he had run down so swiftly that afternoon he came to a high bank of earth, masked with reeds. He felt his way carefully along the foot of the bank, but could not find that it came to an end. Then he groped his way in the opposite direction. The bank still baffled him. He paused to rest and, putting out his hand, felt nothing but water and so got a second ducking, and a nose and mouthful of liquid mud. This time he lay on his back on a tuft of reeds for a long period, and having finally recovered his wind and cleared his mouth and nose, he decided upon a course of action.

"Help!" called Sheehan. He listened. "Help! Here's a escaped prisoner! Hey, Germans, help!"

He listened a second time, but heard nothing.

"Help, help!" he cried. "If you don't hurry you won't get me!"

This time there was a crashing in the reeds, the sound of men hurriedly squdging their way through the mud, and hands groped in the darkness. One landed on Sheehan's chest and shifted quickly to his throat.

"Shut up, —— you!" said a husky whisper. "Where do you think you are? One more blatt out of you and I'll knock every tooth you've got down your throat!"

"Oy," said Sheehan faintly, "Americans, is it? Have we licked the Germans already?"

"It's the little kike," said another voice. "Shsh. We run off from the boche the same time you did."

"Are you prisoners, too?" asked Sheehan.

"Sure. What do you think we are, sightseers?"

"Well, if you are prisoners, you needn't give yourself the trouble to come and rescue me," said Sheehan, "because I'm goin' to give myself up. I crawled around in this mud all afternoon, and it ain't worth the trouble."

"Don't you think it for a minute," said the other two together. "You stick around. If you go in, the whole German army'll be out after us."

"Who the —— are you?" cried Sheehan. "I ain't a recruit you should tell me what I can do or not. I tell you I ain't going to stay in this marsh no more to be eat up by them mosquitoes. I got something better to do with my time."

"Well, you can do as you please with your time, but we got our own necks to think of," remarked the other.

"For your neck I should worry," replied Sheehan. "If I stay in this mud any longer, I'm a dead man myself."

"We're goin' to get out ourselves," said the third man. "We don't crave to have them moskeeters pick our bones neither. We was on our way when we heard you hollerin'."

"No," said Sheehan, "I ain't got the time to crawl around in no mud. I'm through with that stuff."

"Listen," said the man who had first spoken, "you come with us and you keep your yawp shut or I'll wring your neck right now and shove your head down into the mud. Now take your choice."

"Oh well," said Sheehan, "if you feel that way about it, there ain't nothing to do but go with you."

"Imagine this guy!" said the other. "Us havin' to go down on our knees to get him to leave us rescue him."

THE two men turned and began to crawl through the reeds, taking Sheehan with them. The men seemed to know their way, for in a short time they turned the corner of the bank and Sheehan could feel that they had left the reeds and were lying in high grass. After a time the three sat up on their knees to reconnoiter. Sheehan had to pry his swollen eyelids apart with his fingers and he noticed with satisfaction that the others had to do the same thing. There were a great many men moving in the field, lanterns glimmered, and at the far end by the railroad tracks some torches attached to acetylene tanks lighted an inclosure in which were the prisoners.

"Now what should we do?" asked Sheehan. "We ain't got no more chance to cross that field alive than if we was at a Irishers clam-bake."

"Uh," said the other two, "they didn't have them lights goin' so strong a few minutes ago."

The three of them looked sadly at the field and over their shoulders at the black belt of river rustling slowly along. The only thing that prevented them from swimming the river and getting away into the darkness on the farther side was that none of them could swim.

"Maybe they'll get tired o' runnin' around the field and go to bed," suggested one of the pair that had rescued Sheehan. "It must be tough work carryin' stiffs, and at night, too."

"Oh, is that what those men are carrying?" asked Sheehan. "Stiffs? And tomorrow gives it pick and shovel to bury them."

"I've got it!" cried the third man so loudly that both the others nearly jumped out of their clothes. "Listen, now, Tom, you and me will walk right out into that field, and turn kinda casual like and go down the other side where it's dark and sneak around a few freight cars and see can we get across the bridge. And this little bullfrog we found in the marsh, we'll carry in our arms."

"Carry in our arms!" exclaimed the other with distaste. "How come, carry? He can walk, can't he?"

"Sure he can walk, but we carry him and the boche think we're just a couple o' their guys carryin' a stiff. They won't be lookin' for Americans promenadin' right through the middle of the field. Here, you, Finkelstein or Sheehan or whatever your name is, lie down. You pretend you're a stiff, and if you don't pretend good and hard, you won't have to pretend none! Come, Tom, up with him, before we lose our nerve."

"Hey!" protested Sheehan weakly, but the strong hand of Tom was at his ankles and the third man had him by the shoulders, and the next second they were on their way across the field.

"Quick, Casey," cried Tom, "off with our hats! They're a dead give-away!"

They laid Sheehan down again and all three threw away their steel helmets. Then Tom and Casey put on their overseas caps, which they took from some remote part of their uniforms. The overseas cap worn at that period of the war was a round flat one, not unlike the German fatigue cap, and this seen in the dark would help give them the appearance of Germans. Then, picking up Sheehan once more, they set out bravely.

The first twenty yards was the worst. After that they were in the midst of Germans, men hurrying by with lanterns, figures running in the dark, and the sound of axes going somewhere, probably to clear an extra large mass of débris. At times Germans went by so close that Sheehan could have touched them by reaching out his hand, but the Germans paid the group no attention. Tom was working his way gradually over toward the railroad tracks, with an idea of getting into the shadows beyond, and of working down the track to where there were some undamaged cars. Then with the cars between the men and possible watchers they could strike off across the fields.

Now the Germans take war seriously, and they have certain set ways of doing things, certain procedures that they always follow. Among such procedures is the placing of guards about any area where work is going on, which procedure discourages what is known in the American army as beating it or gold-bricking, that is to say, the surreptitious departure for cover of members of the working parties. The sentries also prevent a great deal of minor pillage and theft. Moreover, there was a definite place to take dead bodies and so when two men approached a German sentry, carrying what was evidently a dead or wounded man between them, the sentry challenged in a bored tone and the men halting, he stepped forward with his lantern.

Sheehan had been looking fixedly at the stars and counting the steps the men took, trying to decide how far across the field they had gone. At times he would look up to see if they were making progress and each time a low growl from Casey and a decided pressure on Sheehan's neck forced him to put his head down again. Suddenly he felt the men halt, and then he became conscious of the approach of a man with a lantern and a bayonet. The light ran up and down the blade of this bayonet like blood. Blood! Sheehan gave a gentle groan.

"So!" muttered the guard.

He began to tell them that the first aid post was at the other end of the field and that they could not cross the track there anyway. He mechanically raised his lantern to look at the wounded man, but the wounded man's eyes shut tight with considerable vigor.

"Ach!" exclaimed the guard. He had noted the color of the uniforms. Still he was unsuspicious. What more natural than that the prisoners should carry their own wounded. This guard did not know that at that very moment a strong patrol was scouring the far side of the field for the very man that lay before him with tight-shut eyes.

"*Gehen zie zurück*," said the guard heavily, waving his hand. "Go back. You can not—oof!"

The guard went gasping to earth. *Bop!* His own rifle butt rebounded from the guard's head and as Sheehan picked himself from the ground where the other two had flung him, Tom had set the lantern upright on the ground and he and Casey were disappearing into the dark.

"Hey!" cried Sheehan, "wait for me!"

The two stopped a second and then the three ran on. Over ties they skipped, stumbled and fell across switches, and finally went headlong into a ditch. They were too breathless to get out again and so lay there gasping. When the blood stopped roaring in their ears they listened for sounds of pursuit. All was quiet. Cautiously they poked up their heads and surveyed the field. All was as before. They could trace the line of guards by the glimmering lanterns, they could see the prisoners lying in uneven groups, their backs to the glare of the acetylene lights. Working parties still hurried about, but there was no excitement and no sound of pursuit. The lantern of the guard that they had assaulted still burned. If there was a non-com somewheres who was keeping his eye on those lanterns, he would think that the guard had placed it on the ground to rest his hands a minute or two. It would be some time before an investigation would be made. Meanwhile it would be well for the three to be on their way.

"Come," said Casey, "let's get out of here. We've got a long way to go tonight." They climbed out of the ditch and set off at a sharp trot across a field.

"Don't let's run," protested Sheehan. "We can't run all night, and should some German see us—huh—and we'd have to really run we'd be all out of gas and have to fall down and surrender—huh—what's the rush? I don't want to surrender no more—huh—I got stung that way once, an' that's enough. Hey, wait, I ain't got no more wind!"

The two others who were a little way ahead stopped, to Sheehan's intense surprize. They crouched in the field, and as Sheehan came up to them, a question on his lips, they began to curse. Sheehan felt as if some one had smitten him over the heart. In front of the field was the wide black belt of a river; not a creek or a brook, but a real river.

"Now what do we do?" asked Sheehan.

"When we know we'll tell you," replied Casey.

"Well, I can tell you now," answered Sheehan. "We can follow along the bank and soon there will be a bridge."

"Yeh, but which way?" he asked.

"Let's go down nearer and maybe we could see."

THEY went down to the edge of the rushes cautiously for fear there might be prowling Germans about and looked anxiously up and down the river. To the left there was nothing. There was no moon, but the stars were reflected from the water, and there was that dull glow that water has at night, all of which helped visibility a great deal, and upstream, not over a few hundred yards, was a black mass that could be nothing but a bridge. The three men discovered it simultaneously and after a hasty debate began to move up the bank.

"I think we oughta go downstream," objected Tom. "Every step we take north is away from our own lines."

"How do you know which is north and which is south?" asked Casey.

"Because I remember where the sun went down. It went down behind where the cars were that got blown up. So when we crossed the railroad tracks we went west, and now we're going north. A man has to remember those things when he hasn't got any compass."

"I bet you used to be a boy scout," remarked Casey.

"And I will tell you something what I been," said Sheehan. "I been a soldier, and I'll bet you it gives sentries on that bridge."

"Shut up!" said Casey. "We got enough to bother us without you hangin' crêpe all the time."

It was plain, nevertheless, that neither of the other two had thought of the bridge being guarded. When they came near it they could hear a man singing softly in German, but they could not see him. The bridge loomed dark and mysterious before them. How large or how long it was, was impossible to tell, but its size and length were likely not to interest them for if there was a guard on this end, there was undoubtedly one on the other and a crossing would be impossible.

"I'm going down to have a look," said Casey. "Maybe I can get near enough to tap that guy on the skull. We shoulda brought that other guy's rifle along."

He crawled off into the darkness.

"Hey, what's that?" cried Sheehan suddenly.

"Yeh, what is it?" asked the other man.

The two rose cautiously on one knee. Far behind them now was the field they had left with the lanterns of the sentries and the acetylene torches about the prisoners. A wailing cry had come from that direction, then a confused hurly-burly of sound followed by a harsh yell of anger. The little sparks of light that were the lanterns did not move slowly from one side of the field to the other or flicker calmly in one spot as they had before, but darted here and there excitedly like a swarm of fireflies. Moreover, the prisoners' inclosure, where before had been simply a disordered mass of different sized mounds—the prisoners trying to sleep and keep the light out of their eyes—was now filled with soldiers, an excited crowd, all on their feet and all pressing forward toward the fringe of guards.

"I bet you some one started a fight," said Sheehan.

"I'll bet you not," said Tom. "They just discovered that guy we knocked for a goal. An' also they know we pulled an escape. It's time we got away from here. Who's that?"

"Casey. Shut up. What's all that yellin' about over there? Do you suppose they've got wise to us? Anyway, the bridge is guarded, we can't cross it. There's a couple of guys, one for each end, and they're in the middle now chewin' the rag. It's a long bridge, too."

"We got to go somewhere," cried Tom. "Lookit in that field. That's a bunch of boche comin' out to look for us."

"Ahhh!" gasped the three together.

At least a platoon had come out of the field and were advancing with bobbing lanterns across the railroad tracks. The platoon spread out and prepared to comb the field.

"How's your nerve?" asked Casey.

"Oh good!" said Sheehan. "Let's get a wiggle on or we get captured again."

"Well," continued Casey, "that bridge has got a parapet and if you think you can make it, we can walk along the parapet. We can hold on with our hands and the boche won't see us."

"How wide is that thing and why won't he see us?" asked Sheehan.

"Well, it's about a foot wide and it's on the outside of the bridge, that's why he won't see us. Come on. If you haven't got nerve enough, stay here and get shot. I'm going."

"I ain't afraid," said Sheehan. "Come on. Don't make no noise."

The three went carefully down through the field to the edge of the road and then along the ditch to the bridge. The bridge was built of cement as most French bridges are, and along each side was a wall about a foot thick. This wall was finished on the river side by a curb or berm some six inches wide. It looked even narrower in the darkness.

"Oh," gasped Sheehan, "I can't never cross on that. Suppose a man's foot should slip. Let's go farther up the river, maybe we find a bridge that ain't guarded."

The sound of low voices in the middle of the bridge ceased abruptly. The Americans held their breath. Down the road they could hear very plainly and more so every second the sound of many marching feet, and the feet were coming their way. There was a soft rustle.

"Come on," said Casey in a hoarse whisper, "the little guy has gone already."

The three went out upon the berm of the bridge crouching under the cover of the wall and holding on with their hands. Their arms and hands would be visible to any one on the bridge that cared to look, but it was dark and they must take the chance that they would not be seen. They had not crawled a foot along the berm before the sentry left the middle of the bridge and walked to the end they had just left. He also had heard the troops advancing down the road.

The men on the berm continued to crawl, sliding a foot, listening, bringing up the knee, listening, sliding the foot again. They heard behind them a great deal of conversation in German. The troops had halted and whoever was in command was questioning the bridge guard. Squads began to detach themselves from the main body and go up and down stream. They had lanterns and had one of those Germans swung his light toward the bridge, he would certainly have seen the three prisoners there. However, these Germans were tired, they had worked hard all day, and not one of them except perhaps the officer had any thought in mind but to get the thing over with and get to their blankets.

Here Casey, who was second in line, felt the man ahead of him, Sheehan, come to a dead halt. He waited. Sheehan did not move. Casey nudged the other cautiously. No effect.

"Move on!" said Casey huskily, softly. It was taking a long chance to speak, but if they stayed there they were lost.

AT THAT instant the men on the far side of the bridge began to march across. Tramp, tramp, tramp went their feet. Their overcoats swished and their equipment rattled. They had lanterns, too. It was impossible for them to pass so close and not see the arms of the Americans stretched across the parapet. Casey pulled his in and, leaning as hard as he could against the side of the bridge, clung to the underside of the parapet with his fingers. It seemed as though the marching troops shook the bridge and must jar him loose from such a slight hold and hurl him into the river. This, however, was imagination. The bridge was solidly built and did not shake.

When the last of them had gone, Casey put back his hand again and drew several breaths before venturing to speak. He had heard no splash, and therefore felt sure that Tom was safe. As for Sheehan, he could still see his small form in front of him. Casey decided that they were lost now for Sheehan had held them up just that precious minute that might have sufficed to let them get away into the darkness, and now the Germans were on both sides of the bridge in strength. He could hear them breaking up into small parties and going off along both sides of the bank. Then Sheehan turned around.

"Barbed wire," said the little man. "We can't go no further."

Ah, the wily Germans! They had noticed the berm of the bridge and had seen easily that some one might cross by that way in the dark of night. Hence there was a barrier of barbed wire. And instead of being at the end where a man could see it, it was in the middle, so that he either had to go back to the bank again or else clamber over the parapet on to the bridge in full view of the sentries.

There was a clamor of voices from downstream, and feet thudded by on the bridge. Sheehan poked up his head.

"Oh! Quick!" said he. "Over we go. They ain't looking!"

He scrambled over the parapet and was gone. Casey looked over the parapet in turn. The bridge was just a black mass, but there was a great amount of talking and yelling on the river bank, and the sentries on the bridge were leaning over the opposite parapet, evidently holding their lanterns so as to light the surface of the river. Casey and Tom waited not a second. With a bound they were over on the bridge, crouching in the shadow of the parapet. The sentry at their end, intent on what was going on below, had evidently heard nothing suspicious behind him.

If they started to walk along, however, they might kick a stone or scrape a hobnail or make some other sound and thus be lost. The sentry fortunately began to move away from them, nearer the bank, and when he was some twenty yards away the two Americans crept cautiously along for quite a distance until Casey, putting his head over the parapet, plucked his comrade's sleeve and signalled to go over again.

Here was more danger, for in crossing the parapet they were outlined against the stars and could not miss being seen if an eye happened to be turned their way. Nevertheless, it must be chanced and they were over and on the outer curb once more in the flick of an eyelash. Here they halted, for Casey nearly fell into the river in his haste and it took some minutes for him to get his heart back to its normal location. He wondered what had become of Sheehan and hoped fervently that he would not get himself captured, for that might so whet the appetites of the Germans that they would play about in the fields all night.

At last the two began to creep along the curb, moving very slowly as before. It seemed an endless way to the far side of the bridge, but they at last reached it and could feel the curb slope under their feet as it dropped to meet the river bank. Here Casey, who was in the lead, again saw a dark mass in front of him and, putting out his hand to draw himself along the parapet, he felt another arm there. It must be Sheehan. Was there more barbed wire? Why had the little man stopped? Suddenly as a picture on a slate disappears before the sweep of a sponge, the dark figure of the little man was gone. Casey gasped and listened for the splash of the body in the river. Instead he heard the tramp of feet and a squad of Germans came into sight, swinging their lanterns. They were coming along the bank from upstream and in a few seconds they must see the Americans on the bridge.

Casey's feet were jerked from under him and, with a strangled moan, he was forced to let go his hold and fall. All the agony and fear of a fall from a great height surged through his brain, but it did not last a great while, for his fall was less than two feet. He found himself in the high grass of the river bank, just under the bridge, and above him the lanterns of the searchers gleamed on the curb he had just left. The squad passed, crunching the stones of the road, turned on to the bridge and tramped across it out of hearing. The men in the grass heard another sound, a low ominous humming that grew louder every second.

"Come," said a voice, "we better go, because in a minute the going ain't going to be good."

The three arose, dug in their toes, and surged out of the grass. It was black as a cat's stomach. Some German downstream was giving orders, but in front of the men they saw nothing but a narrow field and on the far side were woods. Woods! Safety! They ran at top speed, crossed the field and arrived panting at the woods. They were not woods, but a row of sycamore trees along a road. They dashed through the trees and into the field on the opposite side. Behind them a bright light gleamed, and by common consent they all stopped and turned to look. They had not come away a minute too soon. The humming sound they had heard was a searchlight truck and this truck had halted by the river and turned on the big light. The field, the railroad track, the bridge and the river, both right and left banks, were lighted as if by the sun. A German, either an officer or a noncom, was posting sentries on the far bank.

"They sure want to get us bad," remarked Tom.

"Well, we shouldn't be wasting time here," observed Sheehan.

"Come on, we go," said Tom again. "Let's follow the road and keep in the field. Now then, who's got good lungs?"

THE three went away at a brisk trot, and when they were out of breath, walked a way and then trotted again. Their arteries pounded, their lungs ached, they were ready to quit several times, but they all did not feel like lying down and giving up the ghost at the same time, and none of them wanted to be the first to back out. So they kept up, and at last, when it was nearly daylight and the birds were beginning to twitter, they came to a field of wheat and, penetrating to the center of it, threw themselves to earth. It was cold and damp in there, but they were too tired to mind.

"I move we stay here an' rest," said Casey. The others made no reply. They were already asleep.

During the day when the sun was hot each of the three awoke, but at different times. Each one that awakened looked about, saw that the other two were asleep, ate a few handfuls of wheat grains and slept again. In the late afternoon, however, all three awakened and stayed awake. They ate wheat for a time and said nothing, but finally Tom spoke.

"Well, fellars," said he, "I'd like to sing a little song, 'Where Do We Go From Here?' "

"Nowheres 'til it gets dark, I'll say that," answered Casey.

They chewed on the wheat a while and then Casey spoke again.

"We're in kind of a mess," said he. "First, where are we? Second, how we gonna get anywhere else? Also, I'm gettin' thirsty and this breakfast food ain't awful fillin'."

"For thirty dollars a month," remarked Sheehan, "a soldier puts up with a lot."

"You get thirty-three in France," said Tom. "What's the matter with you? Don't you know how much pay you get?"

"Ah," said Sheehan, "I ain't got none of it yet."

"Well, don't worry, you'll get it some day."

"And if the Germans win the war," said the little man sadly, "who pays it to me then? And all this time I got captured I don't make no money either."

"Well, let's go," interrupted Casey. "Now, then, I'm a first class private an' I'll take charge. Sheehan, what outfit you out of?"

"I ain't out of none. I was going up to them engineers."

The little man idly draped his arm across his knee so that the wide wound stripe could be plainly seen.

"I got wounded in a big fight," he went on, "an' when I got out of hospital I got a good job with a supply sergeant."

He groaned deeply.

"What are you groanin' about?" asked Casey. "You sick?"

"Maybe he's got cramps," suggested Tom sympathetically. "I've heard tell that eatin' grain will give a guy the stomachache."

"I ain't sick," said Sheehan. "I was just thinking. Me and the supply sergeant, we had a good business selling soap and stuff to the French, but we got caught at it."

"An' they shoved you up to the front, huh?"

"I didn't mind that," said Sheehan. "I been to the front before. I ain't afraid of them boche. Only this here business, you see, we done it jawbone, and every week the Frogs they would pay the sergeant. Well, he got caught just as he was getting his money an' so I never got a cent of it."

"Maybe that's why you're here an' not buildin' roads around Gievres. That's a nice stockade there. My outfit helped to build it."

"Think of it," said Sheehan. "But which guy is better off now, me or him? Anyway he hears it played chow call three times a day."

"Come," interrupted Tom, "lay off the gas barrage an' let's do somethin'."

"Well, what?" asked Casey. "Any man's guess is a good one."

"There ain't nothin' to do but turn around an' go home is there?" asked Tom. "All we got to do is go south and we're bound to strike our lines somewhere."

"That's a good plan," said Casey, "only there's a few flocks of krauts in between us and our own guys. They might not want to let us through."

"We can go at night, can't we? And when we get too near the front all we got to do is to wait 'til there's a battle on and run over to our own lines."

"Flap your ears and eat some more oats," scoffed Casey.

"No, he ain't so wrong," said Sheehan. "If we could get close enough, we could get back to our own lines all right. Raiders get from the boche trenches back to ours. I know all about it. I been on a raid once."

"Um," said Casey, but half convinced. "It's a bet there ain't anywhere else to go and we don't run no more risk of bein' captured goin' toward our lines than we do goin' away from 'em. But we don't start back until tomorrow night."

"How come?" cried the other two.

"Because we ain't so far from where we escaped, and every boche this side of Paris will be on the lookout for us. We'll make a big circle and start back from some sector where they don't know us. Who'd be lookin' for prisoners comin' from Germany? An' we can make lots of progress at night. I got practise runnin' sentries when I used to sneak back into camp after check."

"Come on, we go," said Sheehan impatiently. "It's now almost dark."

"Do you know the points o' the compass?" asked Casey.

"Sure," said Tom. "The sun went down over there." He pointed off across the wheat. "Which way we goin' to make that circle?"

"Make it toward the west," said Casey. "Come on, I hope we find a brook because I'm good and thirsty."

The three began to make their way cautiously through the wheat. The field was a big one, and by the time they had come out at the far end of it it was already quite dark. They kept to the fields, following a road that they could trace dimly by the tall trees that bordered it. They could hear trucks rattling by on this road, but otherwise they saw no sign of troops. They found no water, and through the night their thirst increased. There was no talking lest they be overheard. When Casey halted the other three followed his example, flinging themselves down in the grass to rest. They avoided wheat fields, because of the dust that arose from them, and made their thirst all the worse. Their progress was slow and painful, more so for Sheehan than the other two, because for three days now he had had nothing to eat but the thin soup the Germans had given him and the wheat.

"When do we start the circle?" asked Sheehan suddenly. "We go all the time in a straight line. That ain't no way to make circles."

"Come on, we start it," said Casey briefly, and turned at right angles to the course he was following.

THEY began now to cross innumerable fields, crawl through hedges and duck quickly across main roads. They stopped at intervals to rest and then the march would begin again. The halts after a while became more frequent, and the intervals of marching shorter. At last they halted at the edge of a field on the far side of which was the inevitable tree-lined road. They had crossed many of these fields earlier in the night; at first in one stretch, then with one halt in the center, but in this field, no longer than any of the others, it took three rests to cross. At the last rest Tom flung himself on his face.

"I'm tuckered," said he. "I can't go no farther. My tongue is beginning to swell, I'm so thirsty."

"I'm glad to hear you say it," said Sheehan. "I been wanting to myself the last hour, but I didn't have the nerve."

"Well, we got to have water, that's sure," agreed Casey. He stood up and looked anxiously around the horizon. "I think that's a farm I see over there. Let's sneak over and see can we get at the well. We can plug a few stones first to see if there's a dog. If there is, the stones'll start him barkin' and if any one is awake or there's any boche in there they'll come out to see what made the dog mad and we'll see them first. Come on."

A little way off the high road, a blackness in the black night, loomed the square bulk of a farm. The men knew that in the center of the farm building was undoubtedly a well and out of this well they might draw some water. They went toward the buildings cautiously and in a few minutes discovered a narrow path that led to a gate in the wall. Casey hunted about on the ground for a second or two, found a stone and threw it over the wall. They heard it strike on the stones of the court, but there was no sound either of a dog or an inhabitant of the farm. Casey leaned his weight carefully against the gate. It resisted.

"The —— thing's locked," he whispered, turning to the others. "Let's give a try at the front. Maybe we can get in there."

They crept very cautiously around to the other side of the farm, and here indeed found a great double gate, and open. They could see into the court, a pit of darkness, that chilled their hearts.

"A guy can get lost in there," whispered Tom. "I don't like the looks of it. It's too much like a trap."

"Well, we gotta take a few chances," answered Casey. "The only other thing we can do if we don't go in is to hunt for a brook and take our chance on dyin' of thirst."

"Come on, we go in then," said Tom. "Walk right in like we owned the place or like we was just three jerries on their way back to camp that stopped in for a drink."

"Come on," said the other two.

They pulled their overseas caps into as nearly as possible the shape of the German field-cap, and walked boldly in. No dog barked, no door opened, no light blinked suddenly on. They found the well, but alas it was served by a very modern pump and this pump would arouse every one in the house.

"I'm for takin' a crack at the pump," stealthily whispered Tom. "I'm that crazy for a drink I don't care how many Germans there are in the house."

"Let's give it a shove anyway," agreed Casey. "It's quiet as church here. I don't believe there's any one in the place."

"No, don't," gasped Sheehan. "Listen, now. When it's quiet where the boche are, look out for monkey business."

Casey, mounted on the well curb, stopped with the pump handle in his grasp. He looked carefully all around. The white walls of the farm showed a dull gray in the blackness, the openings of the sheds and barns like the black gaps of missing teeth in a jaw. There was no sign of life in the living quarters of the farm, but the shutters were all tightly closed and even if a man snored behind them he might not be heard in the yard. On the other hand a man pumping would not be heard in the house. But suppose there were German soldiers in the barn? If there were soldiers in the farm they would be in the barn and not the house. Again Casey looked around, this time to see if there were any sign of military occupancy.

"What's that?" asked Sheehan quickly.

The other two listened. A distant booming. A plane? No. A motor on the road and coming their way. Casey dismounted from the well curb and the three crouched together, their hearts pounding, listening to the oncoming car. There was no need for alarm, for there was no reason why that car should stop at the farm, but the eyes of the three were fixed on the black gap of the open gate. There was a sudden glare of light as the driver turned on his lights and the sound of the motor diminished in volume. The car was slowing down.

The light grew brighter, there was a grind of brakes, and the whole rear wall of the yard was illuminated. The car turned into the yard, came to a stop, and the motor was shut off.

Now in the center of every French farmyard, in addition to the well, there is a high pile of stable refuse and into the shadow of such a pile the three Americans hurled themselves. They heard men get out of the car, give a few orders in German and go into the living quarters of the farm. The car was then covered with a tarpaulin, its lights extinguished, and the driver and another man who had either been in the car or had come out of the barn proceeded to do something else. What it was the Americans could not tell, but they could hear enough to give a good guess. There was a wailing as of rusty hinges, a slam of two masses of iron coming together, and the rattling of a chain. Then the Germans went into the barn and after some muttering, were silent.

The three Americans lay quiet for a long time, long after the last chinks of lights had disappeared from behind the shutters. Then they cautiously got to their feet and looked around. The house was as before, the barn was as before, the gray bulk of the car covered with its tarpaulin loomed on the far side of the yard, and through the gap in the walls where the gate was they could see the white streak of dawn breaking over the distant fields. But this white streak was crossed at regular intervals with perpendicular stripes of black. There was a gate there of iron bars and high, and it had been closed and secured with several lengths of chain. The three crept very, very carefully nearer. The chain was locked with a great padlock of iron that would take a charge of dynamite to break.

"Can't we climb over it?" whispered Tom.

"It ain't worth the risk," said Sheehan. "Lookit."

He pointed to a small door in the side of the barn, which was evidently the one into the soldiers' quarters. If there should happen to be a man in there awake, he could not fail to see the men climbing the gate and capture, if not death, would be the result.

The three men went silently back to the pump.

"I'm for quittin'," said Tom. "Let's turn ourselves in. All we're doin' now is runnin' around this country dyin' of thirst. We can't never get back, it's too far. We'll only get captured anyway and what's the use of sufferin' like this?"

"Let's wait 'til daylight anyway," said Casey. "A man always feels better in the daytime. Maybe by day we'll find out we only got a little ways to go to find our lines. Now where the —— is he goin'?"

This last remark was occasioned by Sheehan's suddenly skipping across the yard. The place was lighter now with the approach of day and Casey could see the other run toward the far wall, where the little man stopped and appeared to be listening.

"Come on over," said Casey to Tom. "There's a ladder there an' I bet he's found a place to hide out."

THE two men crossed the yard and sure enough Sheehan pointed up the ladder to the window of a loft. "I don't think there's no one up there," said he. "Maybe gives a window on the other side and we can pull up the ladder an' let it out the other window."

"An' how if that loft is full of a flock o' Huns?" asked Casey.

"I don't hear no one."

"Well, take a slide up the ladder an' see."

Sheehan accordingly went up, listening and peering and trying to breathe in spite of the tortured feeling in his chest that came from the wild beating of his heart. He reached the loft window and looked in. All was black. He listened. There was a stirring, rattling, thumping sound, a sound of heavy breathing, but somewhat muffled. Sheehan was about to descend precipitately, but he gathered his courage and listened another second or two. Then he sniffed, his nose in the air like a hound's.

"Should there be any Germans in there I could smell them," he said to himself.

He sniffed again, but there was nothing but the smell of hay and a rather strong odor of cow.

"It's cows," muttered Sheehan, "cows underneath. In the hay ain't no one."

He turned and looked down the ladder at the two white circles of his comrades' faces. He waved his arm encouragingly and they started up. Then Sheehan climbed into the loft.

It was warm in there and a little dusty. The hay rustled as the men felt their way about in it, but the sound of the cows below, stamping and rattling their chains, would prevent any other tenants of the barn from hearing them.

"Come on, we sleep," said Casey, and the others offered no objection.

Sheehan, who had entered the loft the first, was of course the farthest in. He lay down upon the hay and passed into a state of semi-unconsciousness. His thirst was too great to allow him to really sleep. In this state of half wakefulness he lingered for some time, but finally slept.

He took no pleasure, alas, in sleeping, for he began to dream at once; first, that he owned a delicatessen shop and that he was about to sample everything that it contained. There was platter after platter of dried beef, smoked and spiced, stuffed goose breasts, cold chicken, potato salad, pickled herring, mounds of coffee cake and pretzels, all of it at his disposal. He moved upon the display of food with a glad cry. It was gone and he heard the hay rustling under him as he half awakened. Again he slept, this time to lie beside a leaping chuckling brook that he had once seen in Central Park. He reached out his head, intending to bury his face in the brook, to let the clear cold water flow in one side of his mouth and out the other. The water was farther away than he thought, and he stretched his neck again to reach it. The hay pricking his face awakened him.

"Oh, what luck I got," thought Sheehan. "If I lay awake I near go crazy and if I sleep it's worse."

His ears still rang with the sound of the water of the brook. Huh? Was that some one drinking? Sheehan, wide awake, listened carefully. No doubt of it, he could hear liquid bubbling from some narrow orifice and the happy gurgling noise of a man drinking. Ah! There was a boche there in the hay. Sheehan clenched his fists. If there was only one he had better look to himself. Sheehan was a small man, but thirst will make a lion of the weakest. He cautiously raised himself on his arm to locate the other man more surely.

"Where'd yuh get this?" asked a happy voice.

"There was a canteen on the bench by the wall. I seen it when we was at the foot of the ladder. Shshshsh! He may hear yuh."

Sheehan lowered himself to the hay again. The voice that asked had been Tom's and the one that replied had been Casey's.

"The first chance that gives it," decided Sheehan with gritted teeth, "me and them fellars dissolves partnership. Partnerships always gets some one stung. What a trick they should play on a guy!"

He happened to remember that their

original purpose in coming into the loft was to find a window to get out of on the other side and he resolved to go about finding that window. He carefully crawled over the hay.

Once he had passed the mound of hay on the far side of which he had slept, he noticed that it was quite light in the loft. It seemed that he had slept for hours, but from the advance of daylight it could not have been very long. The window of the loft by which they had entered showed a stretch of gray sky and distant trees with their tops touched by the rising sun, and he could hear birds twittering. From the far side of the loft came loud snores. The two others had heard him moving and at once feigned sleep. Sheehan continued along the side of the loft, looking earnestly for another window, but found none. He decided that he might go toward the back of the loft and look there.

"And if them loafers wakes up when I open the window, what good will it do me to find it?" thought Sheehan sadly.

Nevertheless he decided to explore thoroughly and he turned about on his hands and knees to make another tour of the loft. The hay suddenly sank under him alarmingly, he made a wild grasp to steady himself, felt his legs sliding into space, and then with a soft rustle of sliding hay he fell into space. *Thump!*"

"Ahhh!"

It was not a long fall, but a jarring one just the same and the hay seemed to never stop falling on him. Sheehan shoved this aside, gasping and choking from the dust. There was a great deal of rattling and stamping and when he had at last got the hay clear, Sheehan found himself looking a very startled cow in the eye. The cow was doing her best to pull her chain out by the roots. But who had gasped when Sheehan had hit the ground? Had he heard some one draw a startled breath? Or had it been his imagination? Was it the cow that had made that noise?

Then Sheehan, peering between the cow's forelegs, saw who had gasped. There was a young girl there, a child of twelve or thirteen, a small stool in one hand. She craned her neck to see what had made the noise and when she met Sheehan's eye she gasped again. Sheehan frantically tried to think of some French words he knew, anything to tell this girl he would not hurt her and not to cry out. But supposing she were German? No, she must be French, the country was all French here. It did not occur to Sheehan that he must be a fearsome sight, his cap falling over one eye, his red hair all full of hayseed, and a four days' growth of beard. He smiled, however, and said all the French he could think of.

"*Bonswar, sherry,*" said Sheehan. At the sound of the words and their unfamiliar accent the girl took another look. No German had spoken like that. It was not very light in the stable, but the girl could see the uniform that Sheehan wore. She did not recognize it, but it was neither French nor German, that was certain. Hence this man must be English and undoubtedly an escaped prisoner. The girl, with another gesture for silence, sat down and began to milk the cow. Sheehan remained where he was, half crouching in the hay. The cow, finding that this strange thing that had fallen at her feet made no move to harm her, began to eat, sniffing suspiciously at Sheehan from time to time.

SUDDENLY the girl spoke in French, very softly, as if she were chiding the cow, but she extended the milk pail to Sheehan. He needed no second invitation, but crawled around the cow's front feet and taking the proffered pail, raised it to his lips.

Milk, warm from the cow! Since it was largely composed of water, it quenched his thirst and, since it also contained a large percentage of fat, took the edge off his hunger. Not only that, but it did it without distressing him, for having been some time without it, solid food would have probably made Sheehan sick.

"Ah!" said he at last. "Oh man!"

The girl again put her finger to her lips. She had been watching Sheehan with her bright eyes all the time he drank and the mud upon his blouse, the hayseed in his hair and the holes in the knees of his breeches told their own tale of nights of cross-country marching and of crawling in the mud of roadside ditches. This man was an enemy of the Germans, whoever he was, and since he was an enemy of the Germans, he was a friend of hers. She took him by the hand and, Sheehan following reluctantly, they went to the far end of the stable where there was an open window for the lighting of the stable. The girl pointed through this and beckoning Sheehan to the window, launched into a long and rapid dissertation in whispered French.

"No compree!" said Sheehan sadly. The girl shook her head with vexation and drawing Sheehan closer to the window, pointed. There was a narrow path that ran along the back of the barn, with high earth banks that served the thrifty French in place of fences. The girl pointed down this path. Then she pointed to her mouth and went through the gestures of eating.

"I get you," said Sheehan, "you want me to go down that path and you'll bring me some chow. Good. Er—*Tray bien.*"

He clambered to the sill of the window.

Thump! The girl gasped and clutched her throat again. Another loud thud. Then Sheehan, ready to drop out of the window, heard the cow begin to kick and snort again and at once guessed what had happened. The two Americans in the loft, having heard Sheehan fall, had probably crawled over to see what had become of him and, hearing the whispering, had guessed that he had fallen among friends and come down to join him. Then a head cautiously protruded around the corner of the stall and then Casey and Tom came over to the window.

From the yard came a clattering of wooden shoes and the child's face went suddenly white. Sheehan, astride the window sill, leaped down without further hesitation and the other two followed him. Tom, the last through, was still in air when the men heard a voice in German singing, and the sounds of a shovel and broom going in the stable. The sun was getting higher every minute and the men with a helpless look around, saw that the farm was surrounded by broad fields, that there was no cover, and that it would be impossible for them to make their escape now that it was broad daylight.

"Ain't we in a —— of a mess," muttered Casey.

"Well, you should have stayed in the hay," replied Sheehan. "No one made you come down."

"Yeh, we should have," snorted Casey. "There was a big Hun come out of the house in his suspenders and makes for the ladder. So down the hole we went. Who's that kid? Do you think she'll squeal on us?"

"No," said Sheehan. "she's a French girl. I wish I could speak her language. She was pointing at this road, but she couldn't mean we should go down it because them Germans could see us for a mile, and it don't go nowheres but to them fields."

There was a sharp hiss like that of a snake. Tom, who had been peeking around the corner of the barn, turned and waved his hand violently at the other two. They flung themselves against the wall, where a pile of rotten straw and the wreck of an old cart offered some kind of concealment. Tom flattened himself on the ground.

Then three men went down the narrow road with scythes and a species of pitchfork over their shoulders. One was a man in ordinary garb, but the other two wore round German caps and dirty suspenders that hitched up untidy gray pants. The three of them clumped along in their wooden shoes, *cu-clump*, *cu-clump*, *cu-clump*. Sheehan died several deaths as he watched them. They were three and armed and the Americans had not even a rock with which to protect themselves. Moreover they were weakened with their exertions and their lack of food for the last three days. What chance would they have in a rough-and-tumble? And those scythes would reap a man's head as easily as a stalk of wheat.

The two Germans and the old farmer went on, occupied only in getting out to the field as soon as possible. They had not seen the Americans, and these three were just beginning to feel that sick feeling about the heart that comes after a close escape from terrific danger when a new sound came to them. There was a great stirring and rattling in the stable, distant clattering in the yard, and then more feet pounding on the road.

"They found us," gasped Sheehan, "an' here they come after us."

A voice began to sing, a childish, high-pitched voice. "It's the girl," whispered Sheehan.

"The whole town's comin' with her," said Casey. "She musta give us away."

A choking noise from Tom drew his attention again.

Around the corner of the barn came three cows. Behind them followed another three, sniffing and shoving and snorting fearfully when they smelled the strange men there in the shadow of the barn. The girl, still singing, walked beside the cows. Sheehan stood up and the girl, seeing him, pointed vehemently with her switch to the cows. Sheehan stood aghast.

"What's eatin' this kid?" asked Tom as she beckoned violently to him.

"Oh!" cried Sheehan in a much louder voice than was safe, "she wants us to get in with them cows. If we are with the cows the boche can't see us."

"You're right," said Casey.

The girl pointed with her switch to the other side of the small herd and the three soldiers immediately rushed among the cattle. This was poorly done, for the cattle were frightened and it took all the persuasion of the girl's shrill voice and active switch to head off a stampede. The cows continued their way after a time, not as calmly as before and at a much more rapid rate of progress, for on one side of them crouched strange men, and on the other the girl herded them with shrill cries.

"Walk by their hind legs," said Casey, "and keep your head down, then the boche won't see us."

"I hope we won't have to go far," said Sheehan. "This cow of mine what I got here ain't had a bath since she was born."

"Shshsh!" said Tom. "There's boche in the field."

FROM the field on the far side of the cows came the soft clink of whetstone on scythe and faint voices. The girl sang lustily. The cows clattered their horns and hastened along at a good round pace. If the Germans thought anything of it, they made no remark. Perhaps there was nothing very unusual in the cows' pace after all.

When they were some distance down the road the girl stopped her singing and began to talk to the Americans. These three had worked their way up toward the front of the herd, so that the cows would always be between them and the men in the field, but now the girl herself came up from the back and with loud cries and some switching turned the cows off the road into a small orchard. The men, looking cautiously around, saw that they were sheltered here from observation from the farm by the conformation of the ground that swelled gently up and then down again, so that men lying on their faces could not be seen either from the farm or from the field where the Germans were. The cows, recognizing their pasture, began to eat placidly, spreading gradually out over the orchard. The Americans, after much looking about gathered in a little hollow of the ground and lay down. The girl approached and began a long and vigorous address in French.

"What's all this about?" asked Tom in a mystified voice.

"She talks too fast," replied Casey. "I can speak French as good as the next man, but when they speak to me they gotta go in low gear or I don't get a word. Lookit, man! I can understand that!"

The girl had her apron gathered up to form a sort of bag and from this she took a small bundle of knitting, then a large loaf of bread and some cheese. She handed the food to the men and they proceeded to make good use of it.

"*Vous parlay trop veet*," said Casey with his mouth full.

The girl waved her hands in despair. She had been explaining to the men that they must lie concealed through the day because there were two German soldiers in the farm who worked as laborers in the fields and that the Americans would undoubtedly be seen if they attempted to escape in the daylight. The two Germans were men who had been too severely wounded to return to the front, and they now tilled the soil and gathered the crops of the farm. There also was quartered in the farm the officer in command of the farm district, together with his orderly and chauffeur. It was his automobile, bringing the officer from some carouse, that had trapped the men in the yard of the farm. The girl, however, seeing that she was not understood, began to think, resting her chin on the stick she carried and wrinkling her brows. Her father and brothers were in the French armies and she, her mother and grandfather took charge of the farm. Responsibility is a great teacher and this child was wise beyond her years. She decided that these men, British undoubtedly, cared nothing what the Germans were in the farm, they undoubtedly knew they were there, and would certainly have sense enough to stay hidden. There remained then the matter of getting them away after dark. The girl began to speak again, but slowly this time.

"*Ce soir*," she began, looking at the men.

"I know what that means," cried Sheehan, "it means 'tonight'."

"Any fool knows that," remarked the other two, looking at him darkly.

"*Ce soir*," began the girl again, and made a motion with her hand that clearly meant "Begone!"

"Oui, oui," they cried.

"Ah," said the girl with satisfaction. She pointed over the fields in what seemed to the men a northeasterly direction. Again they showed that they understood. She held up four fingers.

"Four kilometers!" cried the three, like children playing a guessing game.

The girl then seemed undecided, but finally picked up a small stone. This she showed the men.

"Blanche," said the girl.

"That means white," said Tom. "I know that, but that stone ain't white."

"Sh! Regardez!" said the girl.

She picked up several stones and went through a kind of dumb-show. She laid down a stone, walked on a ways and dropped another, then a third a little farther on. Then she came back to the beginning and pretended to look for the stones, expressing satisfaction when she found one.

"What the ——!" muttered Casey.

"She means she will put down some white stones what we can see in the dark to show us the way," cried Sheehan.

"Sure enough!" said the other men. "Clever enough. Where's she gonna get white stones, though?"

"We should worry about that," said Sheehan. "What did she say then, canal? That means canal. I know there's lots of them in this country."

The girl, seeing that the men were getting her directions, waved her hand in a vertical plane a few times and indicated very plainly that if they followed her directions their troubles would be over.

"I get her plain enough," said Casey. "She means she'll put down some white stones for us to follow and that we'll come to a canal and that all we got to do is to follow that canal a good ways and we'll come to somethin'. Maybe its our lines. Listen, little girl, how about something to eat? *Mangay?*"

The girl nodded vigorously. She evidently intended to take care of that part of the affair. Here, noticing that some of the cows were showing a tendency to wander, she went in pursuit of them, and the three Americans proceeded to put an end to the cheese and bread.

"Now I feel better," said Casey. "The sun is nice and warm and I move for a little sleep. But first let's have a council of war to see what we done and what we're gonna do."

"First off," said Tom, "where are we?"

"I don't know," said Casey. "Before I go any farther, I picked up a canteen in the hay this morning. Let's see if it's got anything in it." He took a German canteen from the pocket of his overcoat, a small thing, covered with dirty gray corduroy. "It's empty," said he, shaking it at his ear. He looked sidewise under his brows at Sheehan, but the little man gave no sign other than that of lively interest. "Never mind," continued Casey, "we can get the kid to fill it up for us. Now, then, we don't know where we are, but that girl must know where we want to go, an' as long as she give us the steer, we don't need to worry."

"Do you suppose she knows we're Americans?" asked Sheehan.

"What difference does it make? She knows we're mad at the boche, an' that's enough. I don't suppose the krauts go givin' out a whole lot of information in this occupied territory. I bet she don't even know America is in the war. Well, we been three days on the road, we started our circle and we ought to be pretty near our own lines. I bet by tomorrow morning, after we hiked all night, we'll be back near the front again."

"I'd like to get some more sleep in this nice warm sun," said Tom. "That kid is keepin' the cows around us so those boche won't see us and I move we pound our ear for a while."

"Maybe one of us better keep watch," said Casey doubtfully. "If one o' them boche should want to come over here for something we'd want to know it some time beforehand."

"The girl would tell us," said Sheehan, "you bet. Do you know what it would mean if they should catch her helping us? Well, it would mean she would get shot, I bet you."

"That's right, too," said Casey. "She's got a lot of nerve, that kid."

"Sleep," said Tom, "that's all I'm interested in now."

He pulled his cap over his eyes and paid no further attention to the other two. These after a careful survey of the horizon, composed themselves and went to sleep in their turn.

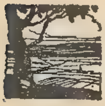
"What's eatin' you?" said a voice.

Sheehan and Tom awoke immediately and started to their feet.

"Lay down," said Casey, "the boche can see you if you stand up. They're out on the road."

"Who you talkin' to?" asked Casey.

"This kid here. I happened to wake up and thought I'd take a look around. The girl was gone and this little kid was lookin' at us as though we was Santa Claus."



THE other two took a hasty survey of the landscape. The cows were all in a bunch between the men and the road, and a few feet away stood a boy of six or seven, his eyes as round as saucers, regarding the Americans.

"*Ma soeur*," said the boy, seeing that all three looked at him with consternation, "*plus loin.*"

He pointed with his switch.

"His sister is gone," said Sheehan. "I can talk French like I was born here. His sister is gone an' left him to watch it the cows."

"Where's she gone?" asked Casey suspiciously.

"Why, she's out putting down them white stones. She couldn't stand here and throw them, could she?"

"No, that's so. Well listen, guys, I'm for stayin' awake from now on. If this kid had been a boche and not what he is, we'd be on our way back to Germany now. If they come over here we can see 'em and take a run anyway. They ain't got any guns with them." The others agreed and the rest of the afternoon they stayed awake, watching the Germans in the distant field.

Finally the Germans left their work and went back into the farm. The boy gathered the cows together and prepared to drive them home. Then he cautiously came over to the three Americans.

"*C'est tout compris?*" he inquired in his childish treble.

"What's *compree?*" asked Tom.

The little boy made a gesture of impatience.

"*Beaucoup des petits chemins,*" said he, "*beaucoup chemins.*"

He looked questioningly at the three, who nodded.

"Lots o' roads," said they, "go on."

"*Alors la soeur a mit des pierres,*" went on the boy, "*des pierres blanches, vous savez, messieurs, des pierres pour montrer la route? Les pierres pour montrer?*"

"I get him," cried Sheehan. "He means she had put down them white stones to show us which road we should take. There's lots of roads and she has put them stones on the right one."

"Sure, sure," said the other two. "*Compree, compree,* kid."

The boy smiled and then pointed out to them how they should get on the main road, making plain by his gestures that they were not to go along the little road that led to the farm, but were to cross the field directly and that they were to follow the road to the right.

The Americans were highly impatient. They were chafing with the inaction of waiting in the field and the night seemed very slow in coming.

"I move we go out now," said Tom. "It's dark enough. Them jerries are all eatin' now anyway. Come on. If we don't get a gait on we won't get anywheres tonight. Lookit! There's that girl out on the road!"

The men all stood up to look and far across the field they could make out a dim figure that walked out to the road, seemed to place something there, and then turned and went back toward the farm. Without further discussion the three began to cross the field, looking ever so often toward the farm and ready to throw themselves down in the grass the instant any one that looked like a German appeared. They reached the road, however, in safety and began to look about for the white stones.

"Here ain't no stones," said Sheehan, "but I see the bundle what that girl put down."

"I bet it's for us," said Casey. "I know it is. It's got bread in it. See the end peekin' out?"

They hastily undid the bundle and found that it contained three round loaves of bread, a half a cheese and all of a dozen eggs, boiled hard, that would keep for several days.

"Boy, oh boy," cried Tom, "won't this be soft? Chow an' everything!"

"Ain't it lucky I saw it first?" said Sheehan partly to himself but loud enough for the others to hear. They looked at him quickly, but he was busy peeling an egg and made no further remark.

"Let's not eat this stuff here," said Casey, "we can eat it just as well on the way."

"Oy!" gasped Sheehan.

The egg dropped with a soft plop from his hand into the road. The other two felt their scalps tingling and looked up from the bundle of food in amazement. Instantly they crouched, snarling, like animals. There was a fourth man in the road looking down at them very sternly.

The farm where the men had hidden the night before was occupied by the family of the original proprietor, the two wounded Germans who helped in the fields, and the commander of the agricultural district. The latter's duties were not heavy and much of his time was spent in bed, for the night he utilized to amuse himself in a neighboring city, returning in the small hours and sleeping most of the day.

This officer, a retired colonel, had risen, been shaved and was standing in front of the farm smoking, while his orderly prepared the table for supper. The colonel, watching the smoke of his cigar disappear, noticed three shadows slinking across the next field. At first he thought they were his own men coming home, but he remembered having seen the two German soldiers washing at the pump as he came out. Who, then, could these three be? Undoubtedly, thought the colonel, they were German deserters, slinking about in the woods and traveling by night. The colonel would settle their hash. He began to walk down the road toward where the men would appear, thinking to watch which direction they took, and then go after them after supper in his auto and arrest them.

The men, however, once they reached the road, halted about something in the ditch. The colonel drew nearer, puffing his cigar. The thing would be easier than he thought. He was right among the men before they discovered him, but when they did the shock was as great to him as to them. These men were not Germans, but Belgians or English, for though it was almost dark, the colonel could see that their uniforms were not French.

None of the four spoke for the space of several seconds. The men in the ditch could see that the fourth man was a German and an officer from the cut of his uniform and the twinkle of gold on shoulder and collar. Tom suddenly uncoiled himself like a striking snake and the officer, stepping backward to avoid the attack, fell over Sheehan into the ditch. Casey and Tom were at his throat in an instant.

The colonel, for all his age and infirmity, was a tough bird. He met Casey with a kick in the chest that halted that soldier effectually and then he proceeded to pry Tom's fingers from his neck. The German's collar was high and very stiff, not only with its internal machinery, but with the decorations or insignia or what not that it bore, and Tom could not compress the colonel's windpipe. He hung on, however, to whatever part of the uniform he could get hold of, trying to get his hand over the colonel's mouth to prevent the colonel shouting. Here, Casey, still gasping from the kick, attacked the German on the other side. The Americans were weak, they were by no means in condition and the colonel seemed to be getting the upper hand. What a pity the board that had certified that German officer as unfit for front line service could not have seen the fight! The colonel, shoving Tom's hand away bodily, struggled to his knees, and getting his head clear for an instant, gave voice to one loud call for help.

Bop! The colonel went as limp as a punched balloon. The two Americans got gasping to their feet and Sheehan called to them from the road.

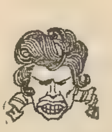
"Come on," he cried, "let's be going. All the Germans in France will be after us now. Oh, what a rough guy he was. I hit him with a rock on his old square head. Do you think he is dead? Oh, I hope he ain't dead. If he's dead, I get hung and no mistake."

"Grab up the food and come on!" cried Casey. "See any white stones?"

The three hunted madly in the road. There had been a questioning call from the farm and any minute might bring the other Germans down on them. The three began to run down the road, looking for white stones. A glad cry from Tom showed that he had discovered one, but they found no more.

"It's the right way, anyway," panted Sheehan. "What difference does it make what road we go, so long as we go away?"

"None," said Casey, "only don't forget that guy's got an automobile to chase us with."



WITH this thought in mind they continued to run, stopping at every farm road and by-path to see if there were any white stones going up the path, but found none until they had gone nearly a kilometer, when they discovered a road that went off through a patch of woods. Sheehan and Casey explored it and found four white stones gleaming in the darkness. They turned hastily into this road, but continued their march at a walk, for their weakened condition would not allow them to run any longer.

"Where do you suppose that kid got them white stones?" asked Tom.

"Probably them jerries had a lot of flower beds and decorations and things around the farm made with stones and whitewashed, like the jerry prisoners do. Maybe she got them stones from a thing like that."

"Well, she dassent take many," observed Tom, "or the krauts would get wise. And what will we do when we come to the end o' this road? How far along do you suppose she spread 'em?"

"We'll find out when we come to the end of the road," replied Casey.

Sheehan marched slightly in rear of the other two, a loaf of bread under his arm. The incident of the early morning when Casey had kept the canteen that he had found for himself and Tom remained vividly in Sheehan's memory. The other two men did not consider him a comrade, but an interloper, a hanger on. Well, the first chance that came he would leave them.

Tom and Casey came to a sudden stop and crouched in the shadows. As they knelt down Sheehan could see along the road. The little track that they were on ended at a wide white belt, a high road, and the dust of this road gleamed under the lights of an automobile. The car's motor hummed with its high speed. *Zzzing!* It went by. There were soldiers on it, standing on the running board, the skirts of their overcoats flying. The three Americans ran forward a few steps so that they could see the mass of the car some way down the white road, its shadow against the reflection of its own headlights all lumpy with men's heads and shoulders.

" 'Spose they're after us?" asked Tom.

"No," said Sheehan. "The old fellar couldn't be dead. Why should he be dead? I just kind of laid the rock on his head. They got too much to think of to run around in automobiles after a couple of fellars they don't know who they are."

"I hope you're right," said Casey, "but don't you kid yourself about them not knowin' who done it. Every civilian in these occupied districts is photographed and after a stunt like that they line 'em all up and find out where they were. And if there's any kind of an alarm out for us as escaped prisoners it won't take 'em long to decide who conked the old general or whatever he was. Where yuh goin', Tom?"

"I'm lookin' for white stones," said Tom, running about in the road. "We got to know where to go, ain't we?"

"This little road we're on keeps right on going," said Sheehan, "and I'm going to stay on it if there's a whole ton of white stones what says not to. A road where gives it autos like that one ain't no road for me."

"That's true enough," said Casey, "come on, we'll run a ways."

They crossed the road and plunged into more woods, or more properly a line of groves intersected by fields. They hastened across the open spaces, running a way, then walking, then running again, as they had gone the first night of their escape.

"What do you say," panted Sheehan after a while, "that we sit down and eat some of this nice lunch. I'd rather carry this bread in my stomach than under my arm." He had a round loaf under his arm and it hampered his running sadly.

"We can't sit down none," replied Casey. "Do you think we're on a picnic?"

"Well, we can't beat the telephone either," said Tom. "I'm for takin' a rest. I ain't up to runnin' wild all night like a cat. And who knows where we are or where we're goin'? I don't."

"That kid wouldn't give us a wrong steer, would she?" demanded Casey. "Didn't she put us on this little road and tell us to stay on it 'til we got to the canal? Well, all we have to do when we get to the canal is to follow that. I'm a first class private of engineers and I know a little somethin' about this country. When that kid says 'canal' I thought, 'Where have I heard of a canal?' And then it come to me. The Old Man was talkin' about it to the top. I don't know what he was sayin' about it, but the canal means this to us: It runs from the Oise River to the Aisne River and the Aisne River is where our lines are, or were when we left 'em. Listen. If we don't come in sight of the canal in the next half hour I'll sit down with you guys and rest. How's that?"

It was agreeable enough to the other two and they went on more cheerfully. The next grove was crossed and they were in a field when a grunt of satisfaction from Casey brought the other two to a halt. Across the horizon stretched a long line of trees that seemed set on a raised embankment.

"That's the canal," said Casey.

All broke into a slow trot across the fields to the canal, leaving the road. They felt cheered and strengthened. This canal was a link with home. Did it not go into their own lines? No more wandering in the dark fields at night, all they need do would be to follow the canal and they would be safe. This pleasant line of thought was broken by the sudden barking of a dog.

The three men halted and dropped on one knee.

"Where's that dog?" they muttered.

There was no house in sight, there was no habitation of any sort that they could see. The dog continued to bark, baying savagely. There was not the slightest doubt in the men's minds but what this dog was barking at them. That frantic clamor could only be inspired by one thing, the smell or the sight of strange men.

"Where the —— can he be?" said Casey.

They were quite near the canal now and between the trunks of the trees they saw something move.

"Lookit!" cried Sheehan. "There is a man there! The dog is with him."

All could clearly see the man now. He was walking slowly along the bank, the dog ahead of him. The dog must be in leash, else he could have bounded down the bank and into the field after the men long ago. There was a sudden gleam as the man on the bank turned on an electric torch. The beam of its light swept up and down along the bank, then in the other direction as it was turned on the water's surface. Something sparkled above the man's head in the reflected light. The torch went out and all was dark again. The dog continued to bark.

"Let's get out of here," said Tom in a hoarse whisper. "That canal is guarded. I seen the light on the guy's bayonet."

The other men had seen it too, for they rose without a word and began to run away from the canal. The dog's barking increased in vehemence, and they heard the faint shout of the sentry. They continued to run, however, came out upon a highway and turned along it with some idea of trying to follow the line of the canal at a distance. The road, however, swung to the right and began to go uphill. The men slowed to a walk and finally came to a halt. By common consent they sat down in the ditch and tried to rest. Finding the canal guarded had been a sad blow.

"Well," said Sheehan, "I guess I eat a little lunch."

He broke a piece off his loaf of bread and taking one of the eggs from his pocket began to peel the shell from it. The other two said nothing. Sheehan had eaten his egg and was breaking the remainder of the loaf into hunks that he could put in his pocket when Casey spoke.

"I might have known," said he, "that the nearer we got to the front the more guards there would be."

There was silence after that for another five minutes, when suddenly a strange murmur, a distant rattling roar filled the air.

"What's that?" gasped Tom.

"A shell!" said Sheehan.

"It ain't no shell," said Casey, "they don't have shells back here. We ain't at the front now."

The noise grew louder, and Sheehan, who had gotten to his feet, went up the road a way and then called excitedly:

"It's a train! It's a train! Who would ever think it to find a train here?"

"Sure, who would?" said Casey sarcastically. "Ain't they got trains in Germany, too?"

SHEEHAN made no reply. The road they were on crossed a bridge here and mounted into the hills that lined the valley in which was the canal. The railroad also mounted a grade and where the road crossed the track there was a bridge. The train was moving slowly and must pass under the bridge. Sheehan's project was but half formed in his mind, but it began to take clearer and clearer form as the train approached. Suddenly the yellow eye of its headlight was on the far side of the bridge, the sound of the engine's puffing was stilled for a second or two as it went under the bridge, and then a cloud of smoke and steam rolled up from the other side. Sheehan looked over the rail through the cloud of vapor. The tops of the cars were sliding slowly beneath him, then came some empty flat cars, then some more covered cars, freight cars undoubtedly, for Sheehan could see the little tower-like box or vigie, where the brakeman sits.

Sheehan's decision was immediately made. Here was his chance to begone, to shake these two men that would not have him for a companion, that begrudged him the air he breathed in their company. Here was his chance to get quickly back to his own lines. Wasn't the train going in the direction they would have to take if they followed the canal? He took a deep breath, leaped upon the parapet, took a single horror-stricken look below him and jumped.

The drop was not over two feet, yet it seemed a mile to Sheehan. He struck the car roof and fell to his knees. The roofs of French freight cars are not made to walk on, as American cars are, and Sheehan nearly rolled off the sloping roof of this one. However, a wild clutch saved him and he was able to turn around and crawl carefully back to the vigie on the rear of the car. It occurred to him that there might be some one in it, but it was too late now to turn back. He reached the tiny cupola safely and tried to see through the dirty windows. Finding this impossible, he craned his neck around the side. The vigie was empty. With a thankful sigh Sheehan wriggled carefully from the roof to the steps leading to the vigie and reaching the tiny platform before it, he took a last look back along the train. Who was that? Two men were running along the roof of a car some distance back. As Sheehan watched them they came to a vigie, leaped down onto the platform and disappeared. There were steps that led from the vigies to the ground, by which the train crew mounted to their perches and it seemed to Sheehan that the men went down these steps. Were they boche or the other two Americans? In the darkness it had been impossible to tell and Sheehan was unable to decide which of the two he would rather have discover him. He looked cautiously out of the vigie. The train was mounting a grade into the hills, the glare from the firebox lighting the cloud of smoke that rolled back along the train. Where was the train going? Back toward the American lines, of course, but how far away would it stop?

"I can look at the stations," thought Sheehan, "and when I see it one I know, then I'll know where I am."

It was an hour or more before the train passed a station, and then it was dark and Sheehan could not read the name. "We won't stop before it's daylight anyway," he thought, "and maybe I can get some sleep."

The train did not make any short stops as French freight trains did. There was no waiting on side tracks, no stopping at wayside stations for a half hour or so, while the engineer and fireman went up the road and had a drink. This German train continued busily on its way. It whistled for crossings, rattled through dark and silent towns and crossed wide plains that seemed doubly lonesome under the stars. Sheehan crouched in the vigie, shivering with the cold and trying to sleep, but the jolting of the train and his fear of being discovered by the Germans prevented his closing an eye.

It seemed to Sheehan that he must have been on the train all night and that it was very near morning when he noticed that the train had been running for some time at reduced speed.

"Ah," said Sheehan, looking out of the tiny door, "lookit a big town an' lights. I bet it gives M. P. in this town!"

The track ran along an embankment, and Sheehan could see out over the town, the roofs of the houses, black under the stars. The train clattered over switches, and entered a fairly large railroad yard, where Sheehan, peering timidly out the door, could see long lines of freight cars and flat cars loaded with stores and covered by lumpy tarpaulins. There were many men picking their way across the tracks with lanterns under their arms. Sheehan regarded these with horror.

"We ain't near no front," he muttered, "what should they have so many lanterns for? Near the front would be air raids on a town with lanterns. I bet we jumped on a train that went the wrong way. Now what should I do?"

He cautiously opened the door a little wider and went out onto the step so that he could see ahead over the cars. All was blackness with here and there a switch-light, or the glimmer of a lantern as some trainman crossed the yard. Sheehan's terror began to get possession of him. It was cold and he could hear roosters crowing and there was that fresh smell in the air that means daylight coming. And if daylight should find him in that railroad yard, his recapture was certain.

Suddenly he gave an involuntary gasp. Feet crunched on the ballast beside the train and more than that, Sheehan could see the gleam of a lantern swinging. The feet stopped and the lantern light wavered and disappeared. Almost at once it reappeared. Then a new sound. *Tap-tap! Clank! Tap-tap!* Voices. The feet began to grind the ballast again, nearer, nearer. A lantern was swung in Sheehan's face and an electric torch dazzled him.

"Ach!" said a voice.

There was a surprized grunt, then considerable excited comment. Sheehan, half dead with the fear of being instantly shot, could hear but dimly and his eyes were still blinded by the dazzle of the light. Well, they had seen him, no doubt of that, so putting one hand above his head in token of surrender, and clinging to the hand-rail with the other, Sheehan cautiously descended the steps. On the ground they swung the torch out of his eyes, but still inspected him with the lantern. Finally this was lowered, and after a few seconds Sheehan could see that he was confronted by two German soldiers and two other men, evidently railroad employees, for they held hammers and one of them carried a lantern also. The soldiers wore helmets such as Sheehan had seen in pictures of the early days of the war, they had long overcoats, and one was old with long white mustaches. The other was a young man, but with hollow cheeks, sunken eyes and a nose that gleamed in the lantern light, a long thin, pointed nose with a drop on the tip. This man coughed from time to time long and rackingly.

"Englishman," said the old German, "what are you doing here?"

He, of course, spoke in German, which Sheehan did not understand and in addition he was incapable of speech at that moment. The German growled impatiently. Then one of the other men spoke, this time in fairly decent English.

"You're English, what?" he asked.

"No, I ain't," said Sheehan, "I'm an American."

"Well, what are you doing on the train?"

"You'll never know," said Sheehan, getting back some of his wits and determined to put a bold front on the affair.

"You need not be afraid," said the other, "I and this man are Belgians. We are railroad workmen, we look at the wheels, what? The others are German soldiers. They walk around the train and see if there are deserters or people riding on it that should not. I never see an American before. You look like English. What are you doing on that train?"

"I was a prisoner," said Sheehan, "but I got away. I was trying to get back to my own outfit. What place is this? Is it far from the lines?"

"Oh yes, quite," said the other. "This is Mariembourg, in Belgium."

"Belgium!" cried Sheehan. "Now I will never get home! What luck I've got!"

Here the old German growled impatiently and the Belgian spoke to him at some length in French, but the German shook his head. The thin soldier looked with great interest from one to the other, projecting his long nose into the center of the group and listening with every appearance of great interest. During the recital of the Belgian, the thin man looked suddenly at Sheehan and smiled, as much as to say, "I know just how you feel."

"I told him," said the Belgian, turning to Sheehan, "that you were deserter, that you want to go to Holland and that you were American. I ask him to let you go."

"Do you think he will?" asked Sheehan.

THE Belgian shrugged his shoulders. Then Sheehan happened to look at the fourth man, the other Belgian railroad employee. This one had worked his way out of the lantern light, and was behind the big German. As he caught Sheehan's glance he made a gesture of reassurance. The Belgian who spoke English noticed Sheehan's interested look and discovered his companion. The tension in the group became terrific. The Belgian licked his lips nervously. If a fight started here the consequences would be serious. Men were shot for things like that. And yet he did not dare tell the other to come back to the group again or warn him not to do anything rash for fear the Germans would turn around and notice the other's hostile attitude.

Sheehan looked quickly about. They were three to the German's two, one of the Germans was obviously weak and of no account in a rough-and-tumble, and both had their rifles slung. But a single shout, a cry, and Germans would gather like flies to honey. And even while this thought still lingered in Sheehan's mind, he heard the single quick crunch of some one leaping to the roadbed, another similar sound told of the arrival of a second man, and two figures took shape from the darkness. All turned around at the sound of the newcomers. The big German again brought his electric torch into play and its beam lighted the figures of two men in olive drab overcoats. At sight of the two Germans the newcomers shrank back, but it was too late to escape, so they remained motionless.

"It's Tom an' Casey, ain't it?" said Sheehan. "You should have stayed where you was. Them boche have got me."

"They ain't got us without a fight," said Casey.

In the lantern light Sheehan could see the old German's eyes widen, and his hand go for his rifle. The Belgian in the shadows swung up his hammer and the stones of the roadbed ground against each other as the Americans shifted their weight for a spring. The German's hand stopped at the sling of his rifle and rested there a moment uncertainly, then fell again to his side. He was no fool, that old soldier. Before him he saw three men, enemies, desperate and relentless. One Belgian he could see and distrust, the other was doubtless close at hand ready to take sides with the enemy. Beside him the red-nosed German coughed weakly. A consumptive, that man, whose light would be snuffed out in the first shock of a struggle. For an instant his eyes gleamed in the lantern light. Then he gave a dry cluck like a hen.

"Ach!" said the old German.

He spoke in rasping French to the Belgian.

"He would not say anything," said the Belgian, turning to the other three Americans. "He says he will not arrest you. It is no business of his. He is only looking for German soldiers riding the train and Belgians trying to steal things. He is a liar. He does not dare do anything because we are five. Get back on the train and then get off the other side as soon as we are gone. Go straight across the tracks and into the country. You can not hope to get through the town. It is full of soldiers. Stay in the fields and ask the farmers for food. They will show you the way to go. Get back on the train!"

The three Americans clambered back into a car and the old German, grunting satisfaction, picked up his lantern and, after a farewell look in their direction, went on down the train with the Belgians and the other soldier, who coughed incessantly, but seemed to care little whether the Americans were taken prisoners or not.

"Oh, lookit what he does with his light!" cried Sheehan.

"The old tripe!" cried the other two. "Lookit him!"

The German's torch was being waved from side to side, very obviously signaling. The Belgian could be seen with his railroad lantern that threw a yellower light, walking steadily along, but the old soldier was clearly trying to attract some one's attention with his torch.

"Here's where we go," said Casey. "Come on out the other side an' across the tracks. They'll be after us in a second!"

They shoved open the door on the opposite side of the car, jumped down and began to run across the tracks. They came to a track full of cars and crawling under these found that the tracks for some distance were filled. It was hard work crawling, hampered as they were with their overcoats, and they had always the chill fear that one of those cars might start up and decapitate them.

"Here's a wall," cried Tom, "how we gonna get up it?"

"Why, we can easy get to it from the top of the cars," said Sheehan.

This was clearly so and, mounting to the roof of a car, they clambered thence with some difficulty to the top of the wall. From here they could see a number of small mean houses, tiny gardens and the open country beyond. Behind them was the huge railroad yard, black with cars, and the sky on the far side of it already white. They could hear a confused sound of feet running in the distance.

"It's the boche searchin' the train," muttered Casey.

"Lookit!" said Sheehan huskily.

He pointed along the wall to where the houses of the town began and a bridge crossed a tiny river. There was a street light there, suspended from the corner of a house and under the light was a sentry box. It was occupied, moreover, by a soldier with fixed bayonet. The light twinkled on his weapon.

"Let's get down," the Americans said to each other and, lowering themselves by their hands, they dropped to the street. As much as they tried to be silent, they could not help making a little noise and Sheehan had given a short cry, for he had landed painfully on a stone. In one of the mean houses a dog began to clamor and one of his companions outside took up the cry. The men ran down a narrow lane between the houses, crossed a tiny brook, and found themselves in the fields. Behind them the dogs barked wildly.

"They'll know which way we went, all right," muttered Tom, "with all them dogs barkin'. Even a jerry could dope that out."

"Let's go," said Sheehan. "Look, it's coming day fast."

This was true. Daylight was rapidly arising. They could easily see the corner of a group of houses near the town, and the chimneys were all clearly outlined against the sky. The three began to trot across the fields, looking for shelter.

THE country thereabouts was hilly. The men climbed up slopes, slid down into deep dingles, climbed more slopes and cursed the rising sun. They were looking for a patch of woods, a haycock, anything to shelter them from sight, but there were no woods, no wheat, and they dared not stay in the hollows of the ground where they could not have a view of the surrounding country and be able to discover searching parties while the searchers were still at a distance. They finally got out of the hilly section, but did not realize it until they discovered themselves in the center of a wide plain, slightly rolling, with not the slightest sign of shelter. It was now broad day with a cloudless sky.

"I think we better climb up in that tree," said Sheehan. "We can't go no more on these fields. They can see us a mile away."

"Who can see us?" asked Tom.

"He's right," interrupted Casey. "The old boche will tell 'em we was on the train and the guy in the sentry box will say he heard the dogs barkin' and that means we took to the country, and you bet your life the krauts will be gallopin' around here all day. We been runnin' around too long after daylight as it is. Who knows who might have spotted us an' gone off to tell the nearest soldiers?"

"Well, me for the tree," said Sheehan.

He led the way to the only shelter, a gnarled and ugly tree with wide low branches, something like an apple tree. Into this the three of them climbed and sheltered themselves among the branches. The seats on the limbs were not over comfortable and it looked as if they were going to pass an uncomfortable day. Tom, who had been parting the branches and looking about, gave a kind of gasp.

"Lookit," said he, "there's a road. We never seen it because of the grass."

The other two looked. There was a white dusty road that ran within twenty yards of the tree and that had been invisible to them before.

"We better get down," continued Tom, "because we're too near the road. People can see us from it, maybe."

The three men made no move to descend. They were all looking intently down the white road, toward the southern horizon. Something was moving on the road. The men watched silently. The mysterious object drew nearer. It at first looked like a bicycle, but it was not on the road. It was in the field and when it came nearer they saw it was a spider-like affair of three wheels. It was a bicycle for riding narrow-gauge railroads, with two wheels on one track and a third on the other. The Germans lacked rubber for tires and so their liaison agents and bicyclists rode the rails on iron wheels. The men wore leather caps of an unusual pattern and had rifles slung over their shoulders. They pedalled steadily along, drew near the tree, passed it, and continued northward.

"They'd be nice birds to run into, wouldn't they?" muttered Casey.

After that the men did not converse. They were exhausted, worn with lack of food and sleep.

Sheehan had offered no explanation of how he had happened to leave the men and jump from the bridge to the train the night before. The other two had made no mention of the matter and Sheehan was beginning to have a suspicion that they had not known he was on the train until they saw him in the yard. He wondered if the sound of people speaking English had drawn them. Well, they were together again and must make the best of it.

He wondered if the others knew they were in Belgium. Sheehan could have wept at this thought. Hunger and thirst and sleeplessness were beginning to weaken his nerve. What a terrible journey this had been, skulking and crawling and running about in the fields! And one thing stuck fast in Sheehan's mind, one thing he could not forget—the twinkle of the light on the guard's bayonet in the sentry box outside the railroad yard. His head reeled from lack of sleep, but he dared not close his eyes lest he slumber and fall out of the tree. He knew he could sleep, and deeply, in spite of the limb on which he sat, and felt as if it were cutting him in two.

A cough from Tom and a hasty exclamation from Casey startled him. The other two were looking earnestly down the road. Sheehan wondered if he looked as tired as they did. Their eyes were red, their faces lined and seamed with fatigue and black with the dirt of their all-night railroad journey.

"Here comes another guy," muttered Casey. "He looks like a soldier, he's got a pack on."

They breathlessly watched the strange man approach. He did not walk like a soldier, but slouchingly, shifting his heavy pack from one shoulder to the other. As he came near the tree, he suddenly halted, looked ahead a second or two and then scuttled toward the tree. The Americans looked to see what had startled the other man. The German soldiers on the bicycles had dismounted some distance down the road, and were apparently looking the country over searchingly.

"If he is afraid of the Germans he ought to be a friend of ours," remarked Sheehan.

The others, intent on watching the newcomer, did not reply. The latter came under the tree and hid behind the trunk. Here he removed his pack and wiped his brow.

"Hi!" called Sheehan.

The man under the tree nearly leaped out of his clothes and the other two Americans made ineffectual efforts to seize Sheehan. The sound of them in the tree made the man on the ground look up. At first he seemed panic-stricken and started to run, but took a second look and seemed reassured. His face was quite pallid, but he gradually recovered his composure, and even essayed to smile.

"Anglais?" he asked.

"American," replied Sheehan.

"Ahhhh!" exclaimed the man with interest.

He then began a long dissertation in French, of which the Americans caught not a word except *soldats*.

"That's right," muttered Casey. "Let's see where them two krauts are." The two Germans were still in sight, pushing their bicycle along the track.

"Jump down and see can you see 'em from the ground," continued Casey.

Sheehan jumped down and reported that the Germans were not to be seen. Then directing Tom to stay in the tree and warn them if the Germans returned, Casey jumped down likewise.

The man on the ground with Sheehan grinned and insisted on shaking hands all around. Then he opened the top of his pack and, lifting aside a tray of cheap jewelry, buttons, and so forth, he showed a receptacle that smelled strongly of butter. The man thereupon winked.

"What's eatin' him?" asked Casey, mystified.

The man explained, but they did not get a word of it. As a matter of fact he was explaining that he was a butter merchant, that the sale of butter or any fatty substance was forbidden and that he made his rounds before daylight to escape observation and to keep the warm weather from melting the butter. So then, since he was a seller of contraband, he had hidden when he had seen the two bicycle soldiers.

"They've gone on," said Tom from the tree. "They've gone on over the hill."

"*Boche parti*," Casey informed the butter merchant.

"Ahh," said that one with satisfaction. "*Er, ca, pas bon,*" touching their uniforms. "*Venez avec moi. Changes!*"

"What's this?" cried Sheehan. Does he want to take us somewhere?"

"I get him like an electric sign," cried Casey. "He wants us to drag along with him an' he'll give us a suit of civies. Then we can get along faster. We won't have to hide out so much if we're in civies. Do you know where we are, Sheehan?"

"The guy in the railroad yard told me we were in Belgium," answered Sheehan.

"Well, I knew we wasn't near the front because you don't see many truck trains or soldiers with tin hats any more. This guy's got the right dope, we gotta climb outta these clothes. An' if he knows a place where we can do it, lead on."

"An' suppose he leads us to a flock o' jerries?" asked Tom.

"He'll sure find out what a wrung neck feels like," answered Casey grimly.

THE guide here entered into a long explanation. He finally paused for breath and Sheehan got a chance to speak.

"Listen," said Sheehan, "I know French. Listen." He turned to the Belgian and speaking slowly and with great earnestness, declared—

"*Voo parlay trop veet.*"

The Belgian grinned and Sheehan thereupon looked proudly at the other two.

"Ah!" began the Belgian. Then very slowly, giving the Americans time to debate as to the meanings of the words, he explained that across the fields was a farmhouse where they could get civilian clothing and that they must go to this farmhouse one by one, both to escape observation or investigation if observed. Men were not allowed to go about in Belgium in groups and if they walked together the first sentinel that saw them would give the alarm.

"*Porqwaw,*" began Casey, "*nous* can't *rester ici* until *nweet?*"

The Belgian after thinking a second or two as to the other's meaning, violently shook his head. He explained by signs and words that there were too many boche about and that there was no cover whatsoever in the fields. At that particular time of year the German soldiers were very thick, for the potatoes were ready for harvesting and hunger was so rampant that the country had to be covered with soldiers to protect the potato fields.

"Well, let's go," said Casey. "Now what the —— is he chokin' about?"

"Who knows," said Sheehan. "Anyway, he goes first. Let him go and then when he beckons we can go. He wants us to go one by one."

"That's what I doped out," replied Casey, inspecting the horizon. "Well, you can go first."

The man turned around, beckoned, and Sheehan at once started out, always keeping the other just in sight. He crossed the road and the little narrow-gauge track on which the bicycles had run and so into another field. Looking back he could just see a man's head, but could not distinguish whether it was Casey or Tom. It was very fine of them, thought Sheehan, to let him go first. Then if they ran into a trap the others would have warning of it. Sheehan decided once more that at the first opportunity he and the others would part company, once and for all. Not only was Sheehan certain that the other two would abandon him without compunction if for any reason he was unable to travel, but he was now almost convinced that they had not seen him jump the train and had done it themselves, thinking to be rid of him. In addition to this, Sheehan had been worried about Tom. That young man, or rather boy, was not a strong character. The hardships and mental strain of the journey were wearing on him much more than on the other two. He had not much to say, and was given to a great deal of helpless looking about. Either one of two things might happen. He might quit cold and refuse to go on or he might collapse from exhaustion. Either event would mean the recapture of the other two. Their only hope of safety lay in keeping on the move.

This train of thought was interrupted by the appearance of a roof over a fold of the ground. When Sheehan had reached this slight ridge, he could see a farmhouse below him, sheds, a barn and a few detached outbuildings. Was this the place? It had a forbidding look, there was no sign of life, no pigs grunting, no hens, no cows. The upper part of the door was open and in this opening appeared the Belgian, who beckoned to Sheehan.

Sheehan, his heart beginning to thump, went down the hill, crossed the farmyard and then tried to see into the gloom beyond the half open door. This door, cut in two parts, so that the upper half could be opened and the lower half closed to keep the farmyard animals out of the house, was unlatched, and Sheehan pushed it open. Silence within. Where was the Belgian? It was dark, and coming from the bright sunlight as he had, Sheehan could not see a thing. He advanced into the room. Ah! There were people there, three or four of them. He was suddenly seized in an unbreakable grip and something black shoved over his face so that he could hardly breathe. Struggling was useless; he was in a grip of steel. The boche had him, thought Sheehan, and he would be shot. Ah, what odds anyway. Suddenly the black smothering stuff was removed.

"Hey!" cried Sheehan.

He struggled helplessly, for some one was kissing him. He had not heard that this was a habit of the Germans when they captured Americans. The pressure on his arms was released and his eyes being a little more accustomed to the light, Sheehan discovered that he was held by a broad-shouldered female, gray-haired and wide of chest, who had thrown her arms about him and nearly smothered him on her ample bosom.

"Hey!" said Sheehan weakly, "lay off kissing. I ain't no man for that stuff whatever!"

At this moment some one else entered and Sheehan had the satisfaction of seeing the affectionate lady of the house throw herself upon Casey, who gave a startled cry. Casey's embrace was not as prolonged, however, as had been Sheehan's, for Tom, disliking to be left in the fields alone, had hurried up as fast as he could, and had entered directly behind Casey. He was received in his turn as were the others.

Then it was that clamor broke out. There were five women in the house, ranging from a young girl and one or two husky matrons to the amply proportioned one that had received the Americans and a very old lady who hustled about wiping off chairs and benches. They all began to talk at once. The butter merchant stood grinning in the corner, his pack on the floor. The three Americans huddled together abashed. They were shoved into chairs and a glass of wine placed in their hands. The conversation continued, each member of the household trying to outshout the others. One tugged at the men's overcoats until they gave them up to her. Another began to set out plates and knives and a third replenished the wine glasses. And all the time they plied the three with questions, not one word of which was understood. The butter merchant spoke from time to time, grinned, accepted a second glass of wine with thanks and seemed as pleased as any one.

"What's that they're settin' out?" asked Tom.

He was beginning to pluck up courage again after a glass or two of wine and the prospect of something to eat.

"Ah, it looks like cakes," said Sheehan. "I hope they got something else."

The ample woman, who seemed to be the head of the household, explained volubly that all she had to offer in the way of food were these cakes. The hens were all gone, they had no eggs, the pigs had been sent into Germany long ago, hence no bacon, it was too early for vegetables and civilians were not allowed to buy meat. It was all lost on the Americans, but they accepted the cakes when they were offered and putting some of the contraband butter on them, found they were better than anything they had ever tasted.

"I could eat another," said Casey, and did so.

Sheehan and Tom made no remark, but ate steadily, drank more wine and ate again. The wine, coming as it did after a long fast, shot to their heads and their eyesight began to grow dim. The women pressed them to have more. The butter merchant and each of the women in turn explained the relationship between the five women, and that their husbands, brother, sons and so forth had all been deported into Germany.

THE Americans tried to be polite, but the food and the wine and their exhausted condition was an overpowering combination. They listened dumbly until Tom gently folded up in the middle and slid to the floor. The women clucked sympathetically and then, gathering Tom up with ease, they conducted the other two staggerers to the barn, hoisted them bodily up a ladder to a hay mow and left them. The butter merchant began to explain that this was not lack of hospitality on the women's part, but a measure of precaution in case of a visit from the German police. Midway in his explanation he realized that he was talking to unconscious men, so he made an abrupt end and clambered down the ladder.

The men slept long and heavily. It had been between nine and ten o'clock when they had climbed into the loft and when Sheehan finally awakened, it did not seem that he had slept more than an hour. The sun was in nearly the same position on the floor, where it shone in through a small window. However, upon taking thought, Sheehan remembered having half awakened several times with a wild feeling of panic as he thought himself again in the vigie of the train or in the tree in the fields, and the cheering feeling he had when he heard the hay rustle under him and he was sure his reception by the Belgians in the farmhouse had not been a dream. Here Casey suddenly sat bolt upright.

"Man," said he, rubbing his head, "I thought I'd been asleep for a week. This must be another day. I know it is, because I got up once during the night. Who the —— do them duds belong to?"

On the floor of the loft near the ladder was a pile of clothes, and Sheehan went over to them immediately. There were three pairs of pants, three shirts, three vests, three coats and three hats. Sheehan examined them critically with the air of a man who was used to judging the value of cloth.

"There's a coat here that was a nice piece of goods once," said he, "only now it's a little old."

"You'd think they might put out a little better pants than them, wouldn't you?" remarked Casey, coming over in his turn.

The pants in question were of corduroy, old and weatherworn. One pair had patches of black on the knee and elsewhere. The second pair was so worn that the bottoms of the legs had a kind of scalloped effect. The main objection to the third pair was that they had been made for a man of very ample proportions and this fact was apparent from the most casual examination.

Tom, awakened by the voices of the other two, arose and inspected the clothes.

"Have we got to wear them things?" asked he with disgust. "Well, I won't. I ain't going to give up a nice clean uniform for them."

"We've got this far in our uniforms," said Casey, "an' I guess we can get the rest of the way. Even if we are in Belgium, we can't be far away from some front. The British got a front in Belgium. Let's go have a chew with them people in the house."

The three men climbed down the ladder, scrubbed themselves at the well, and then went into the house. Two of the women were there, but there was no sign of the butter merchant.

Casey smiled at them.

"*Mangay*," said he, "*spray partee*."

The two women violently protested. After the men debated among themselves for some time and the women had calmed down from their first vehemence, it became fairly certain that the protest was against the three going away in uniform. The three Americans assured the women with hand waving, smiling and grimacing that that was not important. Meanwhile some hard bread and a black liquid that represented coffee was produced, and while the men ate, the women continued to try to make clear what they wanted to say. Out of that volley of language one word was constantly repeated, until the Americans finally noticed it.

"Do you know what they are saying?" cried Sheehan suddenly. "They are saying 'Holland!' "

"The —— you preach!" cried the other two.

There was no doubt of it, however, for the women expressed extreme satisfaction at hearing the men repeat the word. One of the other women came in, evidently from the fields, and said something, probably that the coast was clear, for the others began to tie up bundles of bread and cakes in small parcels.

"Holland," muttered Casey to himself. "How far do you suppose it is? This is gettin' worse an' worse."

The three had no great knowledge of the geography of Europe. They had been wandering with the hope in their minds that some day they would suddenly come over a hill and see the front and the American lines before them. The shock of finding themselves in Belgium had been considerably lessened by the thought that having come in so easily they could also get out with little trouble. And now they were told—and there was no doubt now in the Americans' minds about what the women meant—they must make for Holland. The women had explained why, but the men had not understood. They had jumped a freight in France and found themselves in Belgium in a few hours. Why not jump another freight and go back to France?

"I think we're out of luck," remarked Tom.

"Well, we should keep going," said Sheehan. "Once I was on a raid and I thought I would never get back to our trenches again, but I got back. Things ain't never so bad as they look. The big trouble about being in the army is you can't go into bankruptcy if you get in a tight place."

"What are you doing with that knife?" demanded Tom as Sheehan opened his pocket knife and removed his blouse.

"I'm going to cut off my wound stripe," replied Sheehan. "Maybe I can wear it again. We got to go to Holland an' we got to wear them old clothes what they gave us. And so I am going to keep my stripe. It cost me three francs and it's too good to throw away. And so long as I got it, I don't lose my nerve."

"Holland!" cried Casey. "How the —— will we get to Holland? Er, *oo est* Holland?" he demanded.

The oldest woman understood that perfectly. She pointed toward the west wall of the house, moving her hand up and down several times to indicate that she meant straight ahead. Then she said "Charleroi" several times and as they did not understand, she took a stub of pencil and an envelope that Casey proffered her and wrote it down. When the men arrived at Charleroi, whatever it was, village, town or city, she indicated that they were to turn northward and she wrote Bruxelles on the envelope. That, she indicated by much language and shaking of the head, was either the end of the journey or all she knew of the road.

"We can go and after we have got that far we can get the rest of the way. These countries ain't very big," said Sheehan.

"They're big enough," said Tom hopelessly, "an' full of boche, too."

"They're full of Belgians," replied Sheehan, "and Belgians are our friends, even if we don't know what they say. My Uncle Yoma what come from the old country, he escaped out of a massacre and he was two months getting away, with every one in the country laying for him. We ain't so bad off it mightn't be worse."

"We ain't goin' to start right off, are we?" asked Tom. "Wouldn't it be better to wait for night?"

"Nope," said Casey. "If we're gonna wear them civvies we can go in the daytime. Maybe it's better. Any cop would pinch us on sight after dark in that make-up."

"The old ladies have put us up chow and they must mean we should go by daylight," observed Sheehan. "Maybe they're kind of glad to get rid of us. I bet if the boche caught us here, the whole outfit would get hung."

"Let's get out then," said Casey, and led the way to the barn.

THEY drew straws for the different articles of clothing, except one coat, which would fit no one but Sheehan. When they had changed their clothes they could have wept. A few minutes before they had been soldiers, dirty, unshaven, but still soldiers with the self-respect that a uniform gives.

Now they looked like tramps. The shirts the Belgians had given them were clean, but the rest of the clothing was not. The caps that they wore as headgear were particularly villainous. Casey's was one with a broken visor, a black, sort of yachting cap affair, Sheehan had one of black and white check, far too large, and Tom had drawn a straw hat such as the peasants wore in the fields. In uniform they had but seemed to move with caution, but now there was no name for the same movement but slinking. They went from the barn to the house, looking and feeling like the lowest of thieves. They took their bundles of food silently, stowed a bottle of wine in their coat pockets and submitted patiently to being patted on the arm and kissed on the cheek in farewell. Then, casting one sad look at their uniforms that they had brought down from the barn and presented to the Belgian women, they started for the door. The women immediately seized them with squeals of consternation.

"*Defendu!*" they cried.

"Now what?" demanded the three.

The women only made their meaning clear by sending out Sheehan, then letting Tom go a minute or two later and Casey last of all. The Americans gathered that they were not to travel together, but assumed that this was so that in case of being accosted by the German police, all of the party might not be taken by the same patrol. So they marched along the road that the women pointed out to them, a road that went westward across the fields, Sheehan in the lead, Tom about fifty yards behind and Casey in the rear.

At first they were horribly afraid, all three of them, but after they had been marching for an hour and had seen no sign of a German, they became bolder and walked forward more briskly.

The sky was overcast and the sun therefore did not beat upon them as it might have. They kept on the way all the morning, resting in clumps of trees from time to time, ate dinner and set forth again in the afternoon. They arranged a series of signals so that any one of the three could attract the attention of the other two and could announce a desire to halt, the presence of strangers, or the approach of German soldiers. The last was a very serious matter and the signal must not be a plain one, or it would bring immediate investigation on the part of the Germans. They decided that the march would be always on the right side of the road, and whichever one saw Germans, he would cross to the left side. Then the others were to continue boldly on, to hide or to flee, as they thought best.

For a long time the signs and mile posts had borne the name of Charleroi, each time with a decreasing distance in kilometers, and at last, coming out upon a long plain, Sheehan, who was in the lead, gave the signal for the others to close up to him. When they came up, he pointed out the dim mass of a city set in a bowl of low hills, a river glimmering on the far side, and all around chimneys, derricks, and great black piles of what looked like coal.

"What do you suppose that place is?" asked Sheehan.

"Pittsburgh, Allendale, any old place in Pennsy," replied Casey.

"I'll bet it's Charleroi," said Sheehan.

"I'll bet it is, too, and it's a good place not to go in. These big towns are probably full of boche M. P.'s."

They ate their supper and debated what they should do. They decided that as they were told to turn north at Charleroi, they might as well turn northward now and so avoid the city. They accordingly struck off the road across the fields and in a short time came to a narrow-gauge track that they followed. They passed quite near the great piles of slate and débris brought up from the mines and even skirted the buildings of what looked like a smelter, but it was all silent and apparently abandoned. They slept in a shed, very uncomfortably, and after breakfast, set forth again. Sheehan had suggested the adopting of a ration system as their food was now nearly half gone, but Casey objected, and had declared that when it was all gone then they would simply have to rustle for more.

The going was very difficult, and when, after two hours of traveling, they climbed a hill and could still see Charleroi they held another counsel.

"We ain't gettin' anywheres," began Tom, "an' I'm for givin' up. All we're doin' is runnin' around like crazy men and sleepin' in sheds an' freezin' to death an' we'll get captured by the boche again after all. Let's get it over with. I'm sick o' them cakes anyway."

"Cheer up," said Casey, "we'll be in Holland this time tomorrow night."

"What good will that do?" objected Tom. "We'll get to Holland an' the Hollanders will send us back to France an' we'll get sent back to the front and captured again an' the whole thing to go through with all over."

Sheehan had walked away from the other two and was looking very earnestly down into the valley where a river glittered and a highroad could be traced by the trees along it.

"Buck up!" said Casey in an undertone. "Git your nerve to goin'. Ever hear the little kike squealin'? You, a white man! Ain't you got more nerve than him?"

"He ain't got no sense," replied Tom. "He don't know no better. It takes brains to figure things out. I tell you we'll be better off if we give ourselves up."

Sheehan here beckoned to the other two and Casey walked over to see what he wanted.

"Lookit," said Sheehan, "down there is a road and it goes north. Well, we ought to go on it because we won't never get anywheres in these hills. I can see people down there."

"Yeh, and you can see boche, too. I bet the road is full of 'em."

"Well, we should go down and give it a look anyway. We ain't got time to monkey around in hills. Maybe we find some one to give us a ride in a team."

"Well, we'll go down and have a look anyway."

They called to Tom, who came up reluctantly enough, and the three descended the hill. There were a great many country people on the road, driving tiny carts that were drawn by dogs instead of horses. There were a few men, most of them old and all as ragged and dirty as the three Americans. The three waited in some bushes until there was a lull in the traffic, and then slipped out to the road and along it with their hearts in their mouths. A dog cart passed and the women driving it did not give them even a glance. Two men on foot went by. No more for some time, then as the Americans turned a corner, they came face to face with a large wagon drawn by two horses and laden with stores of some kind. There were two German soldiers on the seat.

SHEEHAN felt as if he had suddenly plunged into a tank of icy water, and he could hear the breath of the other two whistling between their teeth. It was too late to hide and flight would arouse suspicion at once. The wagon creaked nearer. One of the soldiers was lying back against the load asleep, his mouth hanging open. The other smoked a great pipe and regarded his horses. Sheehan, in a moment of panic, remembered that they were in a group and that they had been told not to travel that way. The wheel creaked at Sheehan's ear, the wagon groaned and then it was past. The driver had not even looked at them. He had probably either not seen them or had decided that it was his job to drive the wagon and not to police the road.

After that encounter they marched as they had the day before, some distance apart. The road, that had followed a small river, went through a village and then turned over a bridge. Sheehan noticed in the village that the people spoke a language he did not understand, but which he was very sure was not French. This heartened him a great deal and at the first halt, where the road went through a grove and they had a place to conceal themselves while they rested, Sheehan asked Casey if he had noticed the difference in language.

"Not especially," said Casey. "I heard some women soundin' off at one o' them wash places, but I didn't pay no attention."

"Well, you should the next time," replied Sheehan. "It ain't French they're talking, it's Dutch, and we must be getting near to Holland."

"By ——, that's so!" exclaimed Casey. Even Tom seemed to pluck up heart and such was their excitement that they must be off at once and not wait any longer.

The strange language, however, was not Dutch, but Flemish, and the three were yet a long way from Holland.

They passed fewer Belgians as the morning advanced and more German wagons. The drivers paid them no attention, or at most a surly glance, and after the fourth or fifth had passed they ceased to feel chilly when the wagons came in sight. The country road they were on came out at last at a highroad, a paved way that went straight north between rows of elms. Here traffic was heavier—Belgians on foot, sometimes alone and sometimes with dog carts. Sheehan, who still led, abruptly crossed the road to the left-hand side, thus signalling the approach of a body of Germans to the others, but there were fields on either side, no concealment, and a number of Belgians in sight who would all stand and gaze and so betray the fact that some one had fled at the approach of the Germans. The two Americans in the rear therefore did nothing.

Suddenly over the rise of the horizon a black column came into sight. Sheehan crossed back to the right side of the road to avoid it and Casey and Tom watched him with beating hearts. If the Germans arrested Sheehan, they would have little chance of escape, for the column must have rifles. Yes, they were armed, for Casey could see the muzzles of their rifles against the sky. Sheehan approached the head of the column and seemed to pass it. Casey was not sure for several breath-taking minutes, but at last he was certain, for the column was so near he could see the men's faces and Sheehan was quite a way down the road.

The column was composed of a company of German infantry, either changing station or on a practising march. They had their knapsacks on their backs and their rifles slung across their bodies, barrel to the front and not carried slung on one shoulder as the allies carried them. They wore new gray uniforms without buttons, but wore the little round cap in place of the trench helmet. Casey thought he would faint as the head of the column drew near, was right across the road and then passed him. Some of the men looked at him curiously. He walked along, his eyes straight to the front, the back of his neck tingling, expecting every second to hear a shout or a challenge, but none came.

He did not dare to look to see if the Germans were looking at him or not. At last the shuffle of feet grew fainter and Casey dared to look around. The column was almost half way past Tom and Casey wondered if his face had been as white as the other man's. In spite of Tom's stubby beard and the dirt that crusted him, his face was so white it seemed to shine, Then the column was past Tom, likewise, and moving down the road at five kilometers the hour without a backward glance.

Sheehan, passing over a small bridge, gave the signal to close up, and the other two hastened up to find the little man under the bridge. They ate their dinner there and drank the last of the wine, for they were all still trembling from their encounter with the German troops and needed stimulant. They went on again throughout the afternoon, ate the last of their cakes for supper and slept in a barn outside a sizeable town in a valley, that they judged from the signposts must be Nivelles. This place they had to skirt in the morning, but this was easier than getting around Charleroi, because the slag piles and the pits and overhead railways had given place to broad fields again. They got back to the road again and continued as they had done the day before, meeting the same type of travellers, Belgians and Germans, that they had passed the day before. The German soldiers gave them no more than a passing glance, but the three had not yet grown accustomed to passing them and had the chill fear that though they had escaped so many, the next one would halt them and demand their papers. They began to suffer again from hunger.

In the middle of the day after a short rest the road they had been following turned into one that was paved with great stones, and badly so. There were fields on either side, rolling away on the right to a great forest. They had passed, some distance back, a great mound like a pyramid, surmounted by the statue of a lion looking southward. What was this monument? Ah, something put up by one of the countries round about to commemorate some unknown warrior or some forgotten victory. The three Americans gave it no further thought. They were not historians, and their geography was no better than the average American's, be he college graduate or not. The three were crossing the field of Waterloo, that mound with the lion had been raised by Holland on the spot where the Prince of Orange fell. Down the very road that Sheehan, Casey, and Tom followed, the British were beginning to flee in disorder, when Blucher arrived instead of Grouchy, and the day was lost to the French. And these three American soldiers never dreamed that they were treading ground where a hundred years or so before a battle had been fought and the first link forged in the chain of events that was to bring them to France a hundred or so years later.

There were more houses here and more people. The heat also increased. They kept on, however, fighting the pangs of hunger, slaking their thirst at the wayside hydrant arrangements along the road by which the country people get all their water.

THE houses grew thicker and it became apparent that they were approaching a city of some size. A conference was held and they thought of an attempt to skirt the city, but they shrank from taking to the fields again. Night was coming on, and inasmuch as their food was all gone, they decided the best thing to do would be to push boldly through the city. They must get to Holland before their strength gave out, assuming that they could not get any food on the way.

"Now far would you say Holland was?" asked Tom.

"Maybe it's right on the other side of this big town," replied Sheehan.

"Well, it had better be, for I ain't goin' to hold out much longer."

"Let's go," said Casey. "We want to get through the town before dark. I been in these foreign towns after dark and what I mean they're dark. A guy could get lost in his own back yard."

They set out along the road once more. Little electric cars clattered by them, those coming from the city with their platforms crowded with women clothed in black. There was a great scarcity of young men. The houses grew thicker, they passed a park on the right and were at once involved in a network of streets.

Sheehan halted and the others came up to him. "I see these fellars are walking together," remarked Sheehan, pointing to several groups of men passing. "Maybe in the city we can go together."

"But where will we go?" asked Casey. "I'm for following' the street car tracks. They'll take us to the center of the town anyway."

They accordingly followed the street car tracks along the road that had brought them to the city.

"This is a real town, ain't it?" exclaimed Tom. "Yuh sure it ain't Holland?"

"Take a look at them boche comin' down the street and figure it out yourself," replied Casey. "They don't have boche in Holland that I know of."

The two Germans in question wore the

same kind of hard leather hat that the men they had seen on the bicycle had worn. Each had a slung rifle, and a chain about his neck from which was suspended a sort of placard of brass, bearing upon it the German arms and some inscription in German.

"They're M. P.'s," said Sheehan nervously.

The German soldiers or policemen, whatever they were, did not so much as glance at the three, but went on down the street.

The Americans continued their way in silence. It was hard pounding over the stones, especially when one has had nothing to eat all day. The chill and loneliness of a strange city in a foreign land began to grow on them. It seemed months since they had first escaped from the prison camp into the marsh, and the intervening time had been one long horror of thirst and hunger and sleeplessness. The continual battling with fear, fatigue and discouragement was wearing them out.

They walked for an hour. Then they sat down by common consent on the curbstone and held another counsel.

"There is nothing we should do," said Sheehan, "but keep on going. If we turn around to go back we got just so far to go and we ain't anywhere, while if we stay on the road we're bound to come out somewhere. This city don't go on forever."

"It don't, huh?" sneered Tom. "How do yuh know?"

"Listen," said Casey. "It will get dark after a while and not very long off either. Well, I'll tell you what we do. We wait in a dark spot and knock the first guy that comes along for a gool and then frisk him for what money he's got. That ought to buy us a meal."

"I wish I had a smoke," said Sheehan. "I could enjoy it."

People were passing on the sidewalk all the time. Some of the passers-by looked curiously at the three, others quickened their pace to get out of dangerous neighborhood, but one man, after going down the next street, turned about, came back and went up the other side of the street on which the Americans were. He established himself in a doorway and waited.

The three got stiffly enough to their feet after a while and followed the car track around the corner, down a wide street, past another tiny garden and then down another avenue.

"Don't look around," said Tom, "there's a guy followin' us."

"Where is he?" cried the other two.

"Don't look around. He went ahead of us up the street an' kept lookin' back over his shoulder. I noticed him first because of a phony hat he had on. He's got on a thing like a campaign hat only black, an' a black silk tie like them mama's boys wear at home. He went down the street past this one we're on an' sneaked into the bushes by the garden. Then he come out. He's comin' down the other side of the street now."

"It's gettin' darker all the time," said Sheehan, "and we can give him the shake. Maybe he ain't really followin' us."

"If we can only get out of this town and he keeps after us, we can lay up in the bushes and sock him like I said. Maybe he'll have a roll on him. That wouldn't be robbery. He ain't no business chasin' us. Here's a nother one o' them —— squares. Where does the car-line go now?"

It was apparent in the gathering twilight that the carline went nowhere. In fact it stopped in this tiny square. Across the street was a shelter for people waiting for the train and one or two employees of the street car company standing about.

As they stood there the street lights were suddenly kindled. They went on with a ghastly blue light that came from a sort of hood placed over the light to keep its rays from shining upward and thus aiding enemy raiders. The allies, of course, did not raid Brussels with anything except propaganda, but the Germans had as lively a fear of newspapers hurled from the sky as they had of bombs.

"Finish," said Casey. "Come on an' duck down the side street. If we see a good place, we'll sock this bird in the funny hat."

The side street was but a short one and led them to another wide boulevard, a long straight street down which they could see for some distance. Sheehan, stealing a cautious look over his shoulder, saw the man with a black slouch hat across the street under a newly kindled arc light. They could not assault this man on the boulevard; there were too many people around, too many Germans.

"Here he comes, the ——," muttered Casey. "I bet he tries to pinch us."

THE three looked hurriedly around, but there was nowhere they could hide, nowhere to run to and across the street, at the entrance to a tiny square, was a big German soldier, trench helmet and all, goose-stepping back and forth with a bayoneted rifle. The Americans had all the sensations of cornered animals, flight was impossible and the mysterious man in black bore down on them. The three turned toward him defiantly, but instead of looking at them, he had his gaze fixed far down the boulevard. When he was opposite the last man in line, the stranger spoke.

"You wild crazy fools," said he in perfect English, "follow me! Keep about twenty yards behind. The boche are already on your trail."

Then he was gone, striding along the sidewalk.

"Shall we go?" asked Sheehan.

"Nothin' else," replied Casey. "If he's a boche all he needs to do is to give one yelp and there'd be fifty on top of us, and if he's a friend, he'll probably give us a hand-out and show us how to get out of this hole. Come, men."

They turned and followed the shadowy figure of the man in the black hat.

The man ahead turned abruptly off the boulevard and led the way down a narrow side street. The three followed him breathlessly, for he walked at a lively pace. They twisted and turned, the houses becoming more and more wretched and the people they met more and more furtive. The German soldiers were thicker here or else there were fewer civilians. Sheehan noticed, or thought he did, that the German police were beginning to look at him rather long and searchingly. As a matter of fact it was drawing near the hour when the Belgians were supposed to be off the street and sooner or later one of these patrols was going to halt these three ragged men and demand their passports.

The guide, a half seen figure some distance ahead, suddenly disappeared. When the three arrived at the place where they had last seen him, they discovered that there was the mouth of a forbidding looking alley there. A warning hiss.

"Now what?" muttered Casey.

"Come in here!" said a husky voice.

The alley was dark and smelled outrageously, as all alleys in Europe do. The Americans hesitated.

"What do you want?" asked Sheehan. "I ain't going in no alley with some one I never saw before. Come out here in the street if you want to talk to us."

"You —— fools, haven't you got any sense? Come in here off the street. The first patrol will grab you that see you."

"We seen a lot of them and they ain't grabbed us yet," objected Sheehan.

"Well, that is no sign that one won't. You poor boobs! Do you realize that you sat on the curb in the center of Brussels in full daylight and talked English for all the world to hear? What will you bet that the news of your being here was at the Kommandantur before you left the curbstone?"

This thing was a shock indeed. The three had never thought of being overheard. And so this was Brussels!

"How far is it to Holland?" asked Sheehan.

Casey suddenly seized his arm and then the three of them entered the alley. A patrol, clumping solemnly along the cobblestones, had just turned into the upper end of the street.

"Give us your hand, stranger," said Casey. There was a slight movement in the dark. "Now, then, lead on. And the minute anything starts, don't forget I got a knife here and about a yard of it slides into you. You better not stumble."

They went down the noisome alley, then halted against the wall in silence while the patrols went by. Sheehan heard some one fumbling at a door and then felt a warm gush of air laden with ancient smells, dampness, old tobacco smoke and moldy wood.

"This way," said the guide.

Hobnails clumped on wood. Casey was still holding tightly to the guide. Sheehan went in and the door closed. Tom must be already ahead. It was pitch black, and Sheehan could hear the men ahead of him stumbling up a stairway. What a place for an ambuscade, he thought! But if the boche were going to ambuscade him, why didn't they do it in the street? But the boche wouldn't go to all this trouble to arrest him. Maybe they were afraid that if the Americans were seized in the street, the populace would rescue them. Sheehan dismissed that from his mind also. It had seemed to him that there had been three

Germans to every Belgian that afternoon. A door opened and they went into a dimly lighted room.

The room, as Sheehan discovered after his eyes had become accustomed to the light, contained no furniture but a row of mattresses and some very unclean looking blankets. There was a window closed by a wooden shutter. The light was suspended from the center of the ceiling, and it gave forth a very dim glow, not bright enough to light the corners of the room.

"Come in, fellows," said the guide, "make yourselves at home. It looks as if we had gotten safely away, what? You'll excuse the looks of things here, because this isn't a hotel of the first order, but it's better than you'd get at Saint Gilles. Now then, where are you from?"

"Who are you?" asked Sheehan.

"That's a —— of a way to talk to a man that just rescued you from the boche," objected Casey. "You mustn't mind him," he went on to the guide. "We ain't had a thing all day to eat or drink, and we're kind of all in."

"Ah, of course," said the guide. "I forgot. Just a minute. We'll fix that."

He went out of the door and they heard him go down the hall a way and the slamming of another door.

"I think he's a good lad," remarked Casey. "He speaks English, and he'd probably get hung if he got caught helping us."

"Well why should he risk getting hung for us?" asked Sheehan. "We ain't nothing to him."

"Them women in the country wasn't anything to us either," cried Casey. "Look at what they did for us. And they ran the risk of being caught with us in the house. I'm for trustin' this guy a little, anyway. What do you think, Tom?"

"It ain't nothing to me," answered Tom sadly. "If he'll give me something to scoff and drink I don't care if he's the Kaiser."

"Well, we don't need to tell him everything," said Sheehan. "I will tell you one thing. War I don't know a —— of a lot about, but business I do, and men is just the same in the army or in the wool business. You don't get nothing for nothing nowhere. And when a man comes along and offers you something what he don't have to give you, you should look out for that man."

THERE they heard the slam of a door and the footsteps of the guide in the hall. He came back bringing a loaf of bread, a cheese and a plateful of sausages. Under his arm he had two bottles of wine.

"Dig in, fellows," said he, "I know you must be hungry. Don't say a word until you've eaten."

"Those are the friendliest words I've heard since I got in the army," said Tom.

He and Casey at once sat down on the floor and began to tear hunks from the loaf of bread.

"Have you got a knife I could cut this cheese with?" asked Casey.

"I thought you had a knife you were going to stick me with," replied the guide.

"Aw, I was just kidding you," said Casey.

Sheehan gave a slight gasp, but made no further comment. The guide went out, evidently for a knife, and Sheehan took the occasion to examine the bread and cheese.

"What are you sniffin' at?" asked Tom, with his mouth full.

"Maybe that stuff is poisoned," said Sheehan.

Tom's jaw stopped in midswing, then it went on again.

"I've eaten enough of it to kill me already," said Tom, "so I might as well keep on."

It was noticed, however, that he did not eat with as much avidity as before. The guide returned with a table knife and Casey proceeded to cut a corner off the block of cheese with it.

"Have some?" Casey asked the guide.

"Thank you," said the guide, "I've eaten already. What's the matter with your chum, isn't he hungry?"

"He thinks it's poisoned," grinned Casey.

"Don't let that worry you," replied the guide smiling. "I'll eat some." He did so, and Sheehan, convinced, proceeded to eat some of the bread and cheese.

"Try the sausage," urged the guide.

At this Casey grinned and Tom laughed, whereat the guide looking quickly from one to the other and noting the cast of Sheehan's countenance, also smiled, and muttered that he had meant no offense.

"Now, then," said the guide, after the food was almost gone and the second bottle of wine was rapidly disappearing, "let's hear all about it. Where do you come from, how did you get here, what camp did you break out of? You're escaped prisoners, I know, you needn't explain that. Here, lie down on the mattresses and be more comfortable."

"Well, first off, tell us who you are," said Casey. "It's a little strange to find a man that speaks English in this country. How come the boche haven't gathered you in?"

"I'm a Canadian," smiled the guide. "I was working here in Brussels when the war broke out and at first I tried to get into the British army. They found I had a bad heart and the Belgians wouldn't have me, either. By that time the Germans had taken the city and I decided I'd stay on. We expected the war would be over in a few months, you know. Well, I found out after a while that I could do more good here in Belgium, speaking English, French and Flemish as I do. I've learned German now, also. First we used to help the stragglers from the army across the Dutch frontier, but now we take care of escaped prisoners and civilians who have fallen under the eye of the German authorities. Then we published a newspaper for Beligans only, called Free Belgium, that gives the news of the front uncensored by the Germans. Every once in a while the boche get one of us—Edith Cavell you've heard of—but the rest of us carry on just the same. I suppose you were hunting for one of our aid posts when I saw you. Which address did they give you?"

"We didn't have any address," said Casey. "We didn't even know the name of the town. It's Brussels, huh? I thought that was the name of a carpet. How far are we from Holland?"

"This is Brussels," said the guide, "and right now you're in the section back of the Boulevard Barthelemy. Does that mean anything to you? Didn't any one tell you there was a place down near the docks where you could hide? We'll fix you up to get into Holland. You aren't over thirty or forty miles from the frontier, but first get a good night's rest and fill up on the food. Now, tell us from the beginning all about your escape and what camp you came from. I'm always interested in these yarns the prisoners tell."

"Well," began Casey, having another go at the wine, "we was took at Chemin des Dames. Tom an' me here were engineers and this other feller was a replacement. We was woke up in the middle of the night and rushed out to a trench and at daybreak the whole boche army was on us. Well, they marched us all over —— and a train blew up in a camp we were at and we got away in the mix-up. We been wanderin' ever since."

"And one of them officers told them they shouldn't give me nothing to eat," said Sheehan. "Ain't that a dirty trick. I was like to fall down dead from hunger. And he told us we should lay down our arms and he would treat us right. If he had told me he was going to starve us to death I wouldn't have laid down my arms, but I would have laid down some of them Germans, you bet."

"Well, but how did you get way into Belgium and who gave you those clothes? Give us some detail," said the guide.

"You're a good guy," said Sheehan, "but I been walking all day and that wine has gone to my head. If you don't mind, how would you like to come back in the morning?"

"Oh!" cried the other two in tones of remonstrance. "You're a —— of a man. Here this feller gives us a meal and wine and everything and you want to run him out of the room."

"He ain't got no sense," went on Casey. "Don't mind him. We hopped a ride on a train and got in Belgium and then we got some clothes in a farmhouse the next day."

"Where did you get off the train?" asked the guide.

"Oh, out in the sticks somewhere."

"But who told you to come to Brussels?" persisted the guide.

"No one. We just come."

"Umm!" replied the guide. "Well, tomorrow I'll see how we make out on our arrangements to send you over the frontier. Don't get excited if you hear any one coming in, because these prisoners come in at all hours. They have the address and one of us is always on duty to receive them. Wasn't that explained to you?"

"No," said Casey, "not a word. We can't speak French much anyway. They may have told us but we wouldn't get them."

"Who were they?" asked the guide, his hand on the knob.

"Why, them women in the farm."

"What farm?"

"You sound like a lawyer," interrupted Sheehan from his mattress. "Do you think we're telling you lies? Well, we ain't. His name is Casey and mine is Sheehan and we ain't spies. There ain't nothing German about us but our smell."

"Ah, well, I'll talk to you in the morning," said the guide.

HE WENT out and they heard him clatter down the stair. He went down the first flight, tramped around the landing and down the second. Far away the door banged behind him. Sheehan, leaping to the tiny window, opened the sash and tried to see into the street. The pitch of the roof was too steep, but he could hear the footsteps of the guide going away along the stones of the alley. Casey walked boldly to the door and tried it. It opened easily to his turning of the knob.

"Well, that's all right," he remarked, "we ain't locked in. You're a —— of a man, Sheehan, to go making all those wise cracks. Course the guy is interested. He ain't no boche. The boche don't put out food like that. You know that. If he was, he would have knocked you on the back of your neck."

"Have it your own way," said Sheehan, "only don't keep me awake."

Thereupon he turned his face to the wall and slept.

The men were thoroughly tired, yet their sleep was far from sound. They could hear sounds behind the partition, but when Casey, awakened by the sounds, applied his ear to the wall, the sounds ceased. Sheehan suggested that they were caused by rats. The stairs creaked and distant doors rattled.

"There's people in this house," said Casey. "I can feel 'em."

"Well, they won't bite us," said Sheehan. "Go to bed."

Casey awoke again far into the night. He sat bolt upright on the mattress. He had heard a sound; he was positive of it. Then a blast of cold air fanned his cheek. Some one had opened the window.

"Who's that?" demanded Casey, getting up.

"It's me," said Sheehan's voice. The little man had opened window and shutter again. "I had a hunch," said he. "I just wanted to have another look."

The two of them stuck their heads out the tiny window, but they could not see into the alley. The house opposite was dark and silent. They listened. Was that the sound of a man walking on the street at the far end of the alley? It was a faint far away sound, and might have been made by a shutter creaking.

"Come on to bed," said Casey. I'm gettin' cold here. They wouldn't bring us to a house if they were goin' to pinch us. We're gettin' light in our heads from wanderin' around so long."

They went back to the lumpy mattresses and slept until morning. Again the sound of a slamming door awakened them and feet climbed the stair. They listened while the strange man came up the second flight and began to look about for some means of defense if their caller should be hostile, but it was only the guide back again with a pitcher of coffee and some bread.

"I'm going to be busy today, boys," said he. "I'll have to go across the city to get your passports and identity cards. Then tonight we'll take your picture to stick on them. I'll send some one in with the dinner. The door won't be locked, but I'd advise you to stay in the house. You can take a walk after dark, but stay under cover during the daytime. And keep away from the windows, too."

The morning the men spent in laying about on the mattresses. They regretted that they had not asked the guide for cigarets, but Tom suggested that they could do this when their dinner came in. A distant clock boomed out the hours and they could hear it echoed from the more remote quarters of the city. Twelve o'clock. The dinner ought to be there any minute. At one they still waited.

"Maybe the door at the bottom of the house is locked," said Sheehan, "and he can't get in. I'll go see."

"Come on, we'll all go," remarked Casey.

The three of them went down the dark and smelly staircase to the street door. It opened easily to their touch, but their cautious glances into the alley showed them no sign of a man with food.

"Maybe he's here in the house," suggested Sheehan. "Didn't that feller bring in the food last night from somewhere out back? Let's look."

They went back up the stairs to the first floor and tried the doors on the landing there. They were all locked and there was no response to the knock. They went up to their own floor and down the hall. The rooms on that floor were unoccupied and their doors all stood open.

"That lad got food somewhere in this house last night," said Casey with conviction. "Now where did he get it?"

The question was unsolved. The afternoon dragged along, the men getting hungrier and hungrier, and seven o'clock boomed from the distant church with no sign of any supper. Shortly afterward, however, the men heard feet on the stair and the guide entered the room.

"Hey!" cried Casey, "where is our dinner? We haven't had a thing to eat all day."

"No! Is that so?" exclaimed the guide, and the others profanely assured him that it was. "Well, I'll see about that," said the guide. "I'll have it up at once."

He went out and down the first flight. They heard him go down the hall and the quick opening and shutting of a door.

"Listen," whispered Sheehan. "Did you hear that door open? Didn't we try all them doors? Who unlocked that door for him?"

"Don't go trying to scare us," said Tom complainingly. "You're always trying to wet down the parade."

"Come in the empty room," said Sheehan, "I want to show you something."

They went down the hall with him and into a darkened and empty room that they had explored in the afternoon. Sheehan threw open the shutter.

"Lookit," he said, "I seen this this afternoon and I been thinkin' about it ever since."

He pointed to the gutter that ran along the edge of the high pitched roof, to where the house made an angle with another. It looked from where they were as if a man could walk along the gutter, come to the angle of the next roof, climb over it, and get away on the other side. Of course the other side might drop sheer into the street, that could not be told without a voyage of exploration.

"I just got up my courage to shin out the window and see what's on the other side of that roof," said Sheehan.

"What do you want to do that for?" asked Casey with a mystified look.

"Because that bird that brought us here is a boche!" husked Sheehan.

"A boche!" cried the other two. "How do you know?"

"Because he didn't give us nothing to eat all day."

The other two men laughed scornfully.

"It wasn't his fault, you poor yam," they exclaimed. "He was off lookin' out for our passes. How would he know? Didn't he go downstairs to get us some chow right now?"

"He's a boche!" cried Sheehan. "He asks too many questions!"

"You're off your nut!" laughed Casey again.

"Maybe I am," answered Sheehan, "but I will tell you this, that I am going to have a look at that roof and see can we get away along it."

"Go ahead," said Casey, "we'll watch you."

Sheehan slid a leg over the sill and cautiously lowered himself to the gutter. It was necessary to let go and slide on his stomach for the last six inches or so and Sheehan began to wish he had not been so precipitate. The gutter bent alarmingly under his weight and the window seemed a long, long way above him. Casey and Tom regarded him with interest from the sill.

SHEEHAN looked at the angle of the roof where it joined that of the next house and decided it was too far away.

"Give us a hand," he called to Casey, "I'm coming up again. This gutter may break."

The two in the window, however, had their heads turned away as though listening.

"I think this is the supper coming," said Casey. "Go tell him where we are, Tom!"

"Come on," cried Sheehan, "give us your hand!"

Then he heard a voice, an excited voice, call something. Casey disappeared from the window.

"Casey!" called Sheehan.

There was no answer.

"I'll bet they just got some chow and they're going to leave me here while they eat it," muttered Sheehan.

He tried to climb back up the tiles, but they were too slippery. The thought of the other two eating his supper drove Sheehan to desperation. He remembered the time Casey had found the canteen full of water and had not given him, Sheehan, any. It would be just like them to pull a stunt like that. He turned and looked the other way, toward the street. How high the house was! Then Sheehan nearly fell from the roof in the shock of what he saw.

There were four German policemen there, looking up at the house. One end of the house was on the street, but the entrance by which Sheehan and the men had entered was in the alley. Were these men watching the house? Suddenly one of them seemed to signal and nod his head in response to some sign from the windows of the house. Sheehan waited no longer. The house was pinched, and it was time that he was on his way. With the courage of despair, he began to work his way along the gutter. When he came to the angle of the roof of his own house and the roof of the one that was built against it, he found that by hooking his hands under the tiles he could pull himself up. Fright gives a man a great deal of strength and, strangely enough, gives him courage to do things that in a calmer moment he would never dare.

Finally Sheehan could see over the ridgepole. Range after range of roofs stretched away, with small forests of chimney tops above them. Sheehan pulled himself up a little higher. Ah! The next house backed on the alley and had a flat sloping roof at the bottom of the high-pitched one. If now he could only get down that steep roof on to the flat one. There was nothing to do but try, for any minute the Germans might be at his heels. If he could climb up one side of the roof he could certainly get down the other. The only difficulty was that the far side of the roof was longer than the one he was on.

Nevertheless he went over. The tiles were slippery, it was harder to go down than to come up, and after he had started to slide once or twice he decided to go back and take his chance with the boche. He turned to crawl back to the ridge, and in so doing left only one foot acting as a brake on the tiles. At once he swooped down the roof, gave a loud cry of despair and landed on the flat roof at the bottom, feeling as if he had been standing before a hot fire for some time.

"Ah," gasped Sheehan when he had got his breath back again, "which is worse, to be a prisoner again or break my neck?"

His original purpose in getting across the roof was to get in the first window he saw and so gain the street. The objection to this was that there was no longer any window in the roof. It swept up to the sky a long, long way, unbroken even by a chimney. And what was below this flat roof? Sheehan cautiously approached the edge and craned his neck over. Luck! The roof was over a series of galleries. The house was one of that type that has no interior halls, but whose rooms all open from galleries that connect with the street by stairways. But the only way to get on that gallery was by shinning down one of the posts with a chance of tumbling down a few stories to a cobble-stoned street. There was, however, nothing else to do. Retreat back across the roof was impossible, even without the boche on the other end. The flat roof ended at a gulf on either side, and there were no windows to crawl into.

"Oy!" breathed Sheehan.

He drew in his breath as a man does before a plunge into cold water. There was a woman regarding him suspiciously from a window several houses off. Sheehan turned about, cautiously eased his legs into space and felt carefully around for the post. He found it at last and clutching it tightly slid down slowly until he could get his arms to bear on it likewise. There was a single breath-taking second while he held the one hand to the roof and one hand to the post, but he got down finally, his feet touched the rail, and the next second he was safe on the gallery.

Sheehan did not stop to explain, but scuttled down the stairway. The floor below was littered with dogs and children, but neither they nor their parents made any remark. The next stairway brought him to the ground and Sheehan, taking a turn at random, dashed along a narrow street at top speed. He looked back once to see if he was pursued. There was no one in the street, but every window held a head that regarded him with curiosity and the utmost interest. These people were all Belgians and used enough to seeing ragged men appear from nowhere and flee with panic-stricken haste. The Belgians had learned through four years of experience to hold their peace at such times. As a matter of fact most of the people in the windows were watching for Sheehan's pursuers so that they could give him warning in time of the direction of the Germans' approach.

The next street was a long and dirty one that seemed to terminate at wharves and warehouses. Such places are likely to prove traps, so Sheehan turned off to the east, intending to find the last big boulevard that he and the others had crossed with the guide. This had car tracks on it and Sheehan felt that if he followed the tracks he could get out of the city to the north and so to Holland.

Brussels is a very large city with a population during the war of close to six hundred thousand. The original town is enclosed in boulevards that follow the site of the old walls. The old town and the new town are again enclosed in a polygonal belt formed by a series of boulevards, notably that of the Grand Geinture, August Preyers and so forth on one side, and the railroad from Paris to Courtrai on the other. Beyond this second inclosure are the suburbs: Osseghem, Ganshoren, Boistfort, Uccle. Within the circle of the suburbs and within each inclosure the streets run in all directions, following narrow and devious paths, twisting and turning upon themselves in the most astonishing manner. And in among the streets run alleys.

It was through this maze that Sheehan was trying to find his way. He remembered that before the men had not had any trouble in keeping their direction straight, and he felt sure that if he could only find a boulevard it would be easy enough to escape. It had been daylight, however, when the men had entered, they had come from Waterloo, and following the Chaussee de Charleroi, a straight street, had come easily to the Boulevard du Midi, another wide straight street, and after that they had found the guide who had conducted them to their house of refuge in the old section north of the Abattoir.

SHEEHAN gave no heed to the fact that it was still daylight and that if the Germans were really on his track he would be in more danger than if he waited until dark. He needed the light to see where he was going. He discovered one car track and followed it, but it only took him back to the docks that he had avoided a half hour before, so the next car track he came to he crossed. Unless he came to a boulevard he would follow no more car tracks. In this he was wise, for several car lines cross the quarter all going to Koekelberg or Quatre Vents beyond which was the well-patroled railroad, where the chances of arrest were much greater than in the city.

He began to feel again that weakness in the legs, that feebleness of the entire body that comes from too much work and too little food. The streets were cobble-stoned and hard on the feet, they ran into each other and in all directions in a most confusing manner, and when night fell Sheehan had only reached the markets. The Boulevard Anspach for which he was looking was only the next street over, but Sheehan, confused by the darkness, and frightened by a patrol coming from the direction of the Marche Au Grains, turned at random and plunged into the depths of the dismal quarter around the Grand Hospice. He ran at top speed down several streets, doubled back again and came at last to what he was certain was the boulevard he sought.

"Ah," he muttered after a short examination, during which he had crossed the open space, "it ain't got no car tracks on it."

He looked around again, more closely. The upper end of this street was closed by some dark building and the lower end of it curved out of sight behind more buildings. No encouragement there.

Sheehan caught his breath. Just about where the road disappeared he could see something black that moved and something that glimmered and gave off tiny points of light, reflected from the lamp on the corner. He heard men walking, pounding the cobbles with a solemn tramp. A patrol was coming and it behooved Sheehan to be on his way. Again he turned and walked away as rapidly as he could. At the first corner he turned and cast one anxious look over his shoulder. The patrol seemed to be following him.

Brussels has been in process of being built for some time and most of its old picturesque quarters have disappeared. The process of remodeling the city has not been done any too systematically, so that a man may cross a street and find himself stepping from an old quarter to a new one. The section about the markets consists of new streets, and for that reason the patrol could have easily followed Sheehan. He fled now at random, crossed the very boulevard for which he was seeking, and found himself in the business section of the city.

There was the Central Post Office before him and a huge bank down the street a way. The place swarmed with German soldiers, not only the shiny capped ones, but a number of sentinels in steel helmets. Behind him he saw the patrol crossing the boulevard. A street opened to the left and into it Sheehan fled. His breath was coming in gasps now and his eyes roamed wildly for some place of concealment. There was none. The buildings were of stone, grim and forbidding, great dark piles such as one sees in the business section of any city, foreign or American. Their windows and doors were closed by massive grills or shutters of steel. Behind him Sheehan heard the *clump, clump, clump* of the patrol turning into the lower end of the street.

He dared not run. If he ran the Germans would at once know that he really fled from them and would undoubtedly shoot at him. As long as he simply kept ahead of them by fast walking they might think that he was just by chance going in the same direction as they were. Ah, but that patrol undoubtedly had formed their own ideas of whether Sheehan was avoiding them or not. Whether he ran, as he had back of the markets, or whether he walked at his best pace, as he had in this quarter, let him stop to breathe or to look about him, and he would hear the steady clumping of the Germans behind him. They did not call to him to halt, nor had they made any sign that he could see.

Sheehan turned into a side street lined with what were apparently stores. Now, then, an alley would save him. He kept along the shadow of the buildings, looking intently for an opening and so did not look ahead of him for at least a minute. When he did he gave a slight cry. There was a light at the upper end of the street where it intersected a boulevard and in its ghastly light stood a sentinel, a soldier in a steel helmet. And as Sheehan looked he lounged out into the street and seemingly waved his hand to some one behind Sheehan. So the patrol was really after him! And they had signalled to this sentinel. Perhaps they had shepherded him around these streets intentionally to bring him to just this one where he could not pass.

"I can go in a house," thought Sheehan suddenly. "Them Belgians won't squeal on me."

He was in darkness now under the shadow of the houses and the trees, and since he could not see the patrol they obviously could not see him. The sentry he could see distinctly, but he felt sure the sentry had not seen him. He noticed that the sentry had unslung his rifle.

"The first door," thought Sheehan, "I go in."

Between the shop fronts were doors that led to apartments overhead and Sheehan began to try these as fast as he came to them. Door after door was locked, and he was rapidly being pushed into the arms of the sentry when suddenly a knob turned easily under his hand and he found himself at the foot of a steep stair. He closed the door and felt hurriedly for the key to lock it, but he could find neither key nor bolt. Well, up the stair then, so that if the patrol opened the door they wouldn't see him. He heard voices on the other side of the wall, felt along a way in the darkness, and so came to a door, which, after some fumbling, he opened.

It was light in that room and smoky, so that for a minute or two Sheehan could not see a great deal, but at last he made out that there were three men in there, sitting at a table playing cards. They were in their shirts, for the night was hot.

"Shshsh!" whispered Sheehan, holding his finger to his lips, "the boche are after me!"

The men regarded him in stupefaction. One of them said something and Sheehan then remembered that he must speak French to them. He thought deeply a few seconds, but the best he could call to mind was, "*Attention, boche!*" and point to the street. One of the men, a strong black-haired lad, grinned at this remark and pushing back his chair, stood up. Then it was that Sheehan's blood seemed to turn to ice water. The black-haired man had on gray pants with a red stripe down the side and these pants were tucked into the tops of boots. Sheehan's eye, roving helplessly about the room, noticed a coat rack, on which hung three coats. He recognized those coats, with their red cuffs and their funny tails with the three buttons on each. The black-haired man again addressed Sheehan, but Sheehan paid him no attention. Another of the card players had arisen and had swung open the shutter. Sheehan heard him call to some one in the street, heard the door below open, and the solemn clump of feet coming up the stair. Then the patrol entered the room.

SHEEHAN'S memory became a little indistinct after that. He knew that the three men in the room demanded several things of him in German, but he could not understand a word. At the order of one of the shirt-sleeved men the two members of the patrol proceeded to search Sheehan thoroughly. They found nothing but his wound stripe in his pockets, but one of them shoved a hand inside Sheehan's shirt and dragged out Sheehan's identification tag. This occasioned great interest on the part of all. Sheehan wondered why he had never removed it, but he had not removed his underwear when he changed his uniform for civilian clothes—being newly arrived from replacement camp it was quite fresh and clean—and he was so used to wearing a dog tag that he had forgotten he had it on.

And the worst of it was that Sheehan's was one of the old-fashioned kind with Ninth United States Infantry on it. Sheehan had at one time been a member of that illustrious regiment. It was apparent to Sheehan that he was considered a find. The three Germans put on their coats, belted on sidearms and accompanied the patrol, with Sheehan in their midst, to the street.

Sheehan walked along between the two men of the patrol. He was in that numb state in which a man finds himself after some tremendous disaster. He looked from one to the other of his guards, he noticed the rifles they carried, the effect the blue light gave on their leather caps and the brass effect they wore around their necks. He had for a minute or two the idea of snatching a rifle from the arm of the man on his left and holding up the whole crowd with it; but they were five, and he abandoned it. Moreover, the man on his right held him tightly by the arm.

They came to a place that might be anything from a telegraph office to a street railway waiting room and entered. It was a small, dimly lighted place, with benches around the walls and a bare table in the center. An old man in civilian clothes came from a door in a corner and conversed with the patrol. He went out after a time and the two members of the patrol unslung their rifles and waited patiently. The gas light flickered and a mosquito buzzed. Sheehan wondered vaguely if they had put Casey and Tom in the same jail and if he would meet them again as he had the time he had jumped the freight and tried to shake them the first time. They might not think that he had done the square thing by them to beat it across the roofs while they were captured by the boche. But then he had warned them and if he had stayed to be captured, it would have done them no good. A man entered from the far door, buttoning his coat, and put an end to Sheehan's meditations.

"Now, then," said the newcomer in German, "what's all this?"

He sat down at a table and put on his spectacles. The shabby man who had announced the visitors drew up a sheet of paper and prepared to write. All five of the Germans started to explain at once, but the man behind the desk waved them to silence. He was in civilian clothes and was the *commissar* of police. The shabby man was his secretary and this little den where Sheehan had been taken was the local *commissariat.*

"Who's ranking man?" asked the *commissar.*

One of the three men that had been in the house where Sheehan had been captured stepped forward. All of the other Germans stood with stiff backs, but this man stiffened his a little more. Then he related how he and his two comrades who lived at such a number, such a street had been playing cards when this strange person had entered. The stranger had paid no attention to their inquiries as to what he wanted and they, thinking him to be a drunkard or a demented person, had opened the window and called to the patrol that had happened to be in the street. In searching this strange person for his papers and to see if he carried any weapon, they had found the following. Here the speaker laid Sheehan's dog tag on the *commissar's* desk. Deep interest on the part of the *commissar.* He turned the identification tag over and over in his hand and then gave it to his secretary for his opinion.

The tag was a round circle of aluminum, with Sheehan's real name, his serial number, and 9th U. S. Infantry on it. There were two of these tags, alike, one on the main string and another on one of its own, so that if a man were killed one string could stay on the body and the other one be cut and the tag taken off to put on the cross. The secretary pointed out to the *commissar* that the German tag was superior.

"What think you?" asked the *commissar*.

"I think he is an English soldier," said the secretary.

"Good," said the *commissar*, "so do I. That writing is in English. Therefore he is English."

Sheehan could tell by the expressions of the other Germans that the *commissar* had just said something very brilliant. The *commissar* began to write, pounded something with a rubber stamp several times, took the notes that the secretary had written, read them over, pinned a piece of paper to them and removed his glasses. Another man, also in civilian clothes, entered from the mysterious door like an amateur actor taking his cue. To this man the *commissar* gave a slip of paper and then waved his hand as if to say, "Away with him!"

The three German soldiers, the patrol, the man in civilian clothes and Sheehan all went out to the street, where the patrol clumped solemnly off with the three Germans. The man in civilian clothes, taking Sheehan by the arm, went in a different direction.

Two streets they marched in silence, then came to the great boulevard that Sheehan was certain was the one he had looked for all that sad night. It went away into the night, a long vista of blue lights, with distant street cars clattering. The German took Sheehan across the street, where they waited until one of the rattly cars came along and then climbed aboard. The few passengers in the car regarded them with sober looks.

There were one or two old women, evidently charwomen going to work, a German officer who sat bolt upright on the seat with never a look to right or left and a few elderly Belgians, who kept looking at Sheehan with the greatest sympathy This was disturbing to Sheehan. What were these boche going to do to him?

THE ride was not long. The German took hold of Sheehan again and intimated that it was time to get off. They descended to the dark street and after a short walk Sheehan found himself facing a great pile of a building. It had all the appearance of a fortress of the middle ages, battlemented walls, a great iron gate, towers and, in the darkness, a huge central building like a donjon keep. There was no need to have a sign on this place, thought Sheehan. It was a prison. Sheehan was right, he was before the Prison of Saint Gilles, where Edith Cavell had been confined before her execution.

The man with Sheehan rang a bell and after a short pause the gate swung open and the two passed in. There was an old man there in a uniform something like an American police officer's. This old man looked at Sheehan with that pitying look that Sheehan had noticed so often of late, and shook his head sadly.

"*Anglais?*" asked the old man.

"American!" replied Sheehan.

The German swung quickly around with an admonitory hand uplifted.

"Still!" he growled.

The old man—he must be a Belgian, thought Sheehan—made no further sign, but shut the iron gate. The gate did not clang, it closed with velvet softness, as doors do in dreams, and a bolt fell into place with a gentle click.

They crossed a court and climbed a few steps to another gate, a massive one of solid iron. This swung open mysteriously, admitted them and swung silently shut again. There was a tiny barred window here on one side and the German who had brought Sheehan in held a whispered conversation with some one on the far side of it. The German passed in the slip of paper that the *commissar* had given him, whispered some more and then motioned to Sheehan to step up. A pair of spectacled eyes glared at him through the bars of the little window; then they disappeared, and the spectacled man shortly appeared at Sheehan's side. He beckoned to Sheehan and they went down the corridor. The man in civilian clothes stayed by the window and when Sheehan took a parting look at him he was preparing to light a cigaret.

At the end of the corridor was a rotunda, lighted by two or three open gas jets. In the center of this round affair was a German soldier with a rifle and two great dogs he held by a chain. Sheehan, happening to look up, received the sensation of being at the bottom of a well. Tier after tier of iron galleries stretched above him into the blackness, and from these galleries came little whisperings, creakings and all the uneasy rustling sound of sleeping men. The chill of the place went to Sheehan's heart. In prison! Well, by the sound he had plenty of company. He wondered which of these cells hid Casey and Tom.

They went up an iron stairway, more properly a ladder such as connect different floors of a fire escape. The guard unlocked a door, swung it open and motioned to Sheehan to enter. There was a table there, a chair, and some pipes along the floor that must be for heating. The guard rattled about in the dim light, but Sheehan paid no attention to what he was doing. The guard went out, the door slammed behind him and Sheehan was alone. A table and a chair, but what would he sleep on? Then he suddenly noticed that the table was gone and a bed and straw mattress had taken its place. So when the guard had rattled, he had been making the table into a bed. It folded up very ingeniously. Sheehan sat down upon it and began to review the situation. He looked at the distorted shadow of himself that the gaslight threw on the wall. The door was solid save for a tiny hole through which the guard could inspect the occupant without opening the door.

Sheehan's mind went round and round. He was a prisoner again; that was the starting point. Were the other two also prisoners? What would the boche do with him? What were the chances of escape?

"I can answer that," said Sheehan aloud, "and not give myself no headache thinking. The chances ain't."

There was a heavy tread along the gallery outside and the booming noise of it ran all around the rotunda. As the tread passed the door the little window snapped open and then shut, for all the world like a cuckoo clock. Sheehan heard the little clicking sounds of the dogs' claws on the steel floor of the gallery. Perhaps the guard had been disturbed by the sound of Sheehan talking to himself. The place was silent again.

Sheehan did not feel the slightest desire for sleep. He watched the little yellow specks jumping in the blue of the gas flame.

Again the gallery boomed under the footsteps of some guard, but they halted at Sheehan's door, and before he could decide what this new inspection might portend, the door swung open and a German soldier who stood there beckoned to him. Sheehan went to the door. The guard again beckoned and Sheehan went out on to the gallery. The guard then turned and shoved Sheehan ahead of him to the stairway. The two went down, crossed the rotunda and went out the same door by which Sheehan had entered. The old guard with the two dogs unlocked the door and they entered the corridor. A short way down this corridor a door stood open and into this room the guard shoved his prisoner. The door thudded shut behind him and Sheehan blinking a little in the light, looked cautiously around. Here was a bare room, a map of a city, possibly the one they were in, on one wall, a plan of the prison, looking like a huge wheel, on the other, a desk and a chair. A man in civilian clothes sat in the chair and smiled pleasantly at Sheehan.

"Now where have I seen that guy?" thought Sheehan. For just one second he had the wild thought that the war was over and this was some American officer he knew come to tell him he was free.

"Know me?" asked the man behind the desk in English with a perfect American accent.

"No, sir," said Sheehan. "I can't say that I do."

"What are you doing here?" asked the mysterious man.

"The —— boche captured me again."

The man behind the desk laughed heartily.

"Dirty trick of theirs, wasn't it?" he asked. "Do you know what they're going to do with you?"

"I don't know," said Sheehan. "They would probably send me back where I escaped from."

"No," said the other man and he smiled no longer. "They're going to shoot you!"

"Shoot me?" gasped Sheehan. "What for shoot me? I ain't done nothing they should shoot me."

He had a sudden thought of the old officer that had discovered the three of them crossing the field and whom Sheehan had banged on the head with a rock. Had the officer died? Sheehan gulped and remained silent.

"You're a soldier, of course," said the other man, "an American, and here you are captured some two hundred or so kilometers behind our lines. And in civilian clothes. That means a firing squad in any army."

"Oy," said Sheehan, breathlessly, "you are trying to scare me."

"I'm not," snapped the other man. "Look at me!"

HE REACHED into a drawer in the desk and took out a cap which he put on. He then turned up the collar of his coat tightly around his neck like the collar of a military tunic.

"Do you recognize me now?" he asked.

"Ah," said Sheehan. The man's face seemed to float in a mist that gradually cleared. "Ah!" cried Sheehan again, "you're the fellar that liked to starve me to death. I been wanting to find you for a long time. Do you know it that for three days after—"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the officer, "you ran away about the time I had planned to give you a good meal."

"What was the idea you should starve me to death?" asked Sheehan. "The other guys didn't get much, but I didn't get a —— thing. And after I surrendered and everything!"

"I'll tell you," said the officer, "since it won't do any harm and since this time tomorrow night you'll be swimming in a ditch full of quicklime. I had in mind a little scheme. You see I'm an officer of the general staff, whose business it is to find out different things about various armies. Now, there was a little matter we wanted to know about the Americans. Not much of a question, we've since found all our information, but at the time we were a little anxious about it. So knowing that we were likely to take some Americans in the course of the day's drive I went along with the assault to talk to them. I picked on you as a good man to talk to, and in such cases a little hunger is a great incentive to conversation. But then one of your aviators dropped a bomb and killed an engineer whose engine ran wild and after the explosion you were gone. So was my plan. If you had stayed and talked to me you could have gone back to your own lines in perfect safety. Instead you ran away and you've got yourself into trouble. Well, tomorrow morning the boys practise marksmanship on you. It's a little difficult to do any good shooting that early. It's mostly cold and foggy, and the men's hands are cold, and sometimes we don't kill the first volley. That means we have to tie the man up to the post again and take two or three more tries at him."

The officer here looked intently at Sheehan and taking a cigaret case from his pocket, took out a cigaret and lighted it. When he snapped the cigaret box shut, Sheehan jumped.

"Nervous, eh?" asked the officer. "Ah well, listen to me a little longer. The time has come to show a little mercy in this sort of thing. The war is nearly at an end, our troops are under the walls of Paris, and the Allies have asked for our terms for an armistice. Don't believe it? Look at this."

The officer produced from another drawer of the desk a copy of the *New York Herald* which publishes a Paris edition in English.

"Look at the date. June 1st. Today is the 7th. Read the communique."

Sheehan looked at the place the officer pointed out with a manicured finger.

> In the vicinity of Château Thierry enemy attempts to cross the Marne were frustrated. Violent attacks to the northwest were repulsed all along the front.

Thus read the communique.

"That was some time ago," said the officer. "You probably got off the train at Soissons when you went up to the front. Look at the map."

He showed Sheehan on a map that also came out of the desk—a real storehouse, that desk, thought Sheehan—the relative positions of Château Thierry, Soissons and Paris.

"We crossed the Marne the 2nd of June," went on the officer, "and have been fighting in the suburbs of Paris since yesterday. The request for our terms was received at noon today."

Sheehan said nothing and the officer smoked for a minute or two in silence.

"Listen to me a minute, now. I can guess that you know something of business. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir," said Sheehan.

"Well, war is just the same as business. Let's talk as business men. The company that you have been working for is going out of business. I'm offering you a job in another, a better company. As I said, the war is over, and you'd better be looking out for another job anyway."

"Yes, sir," said Sheehan. "What kind of a job would you like it I should do?"

"I was coming to that the next minute," said the officer. He stamped out the butt of his cigaret and lighted another. "You think it's unusual for a prisoner of war to escape, to live for a week or so in rear of the enemy lines, to find transportation, food and clothing, and eventually regain his own army again? Well, it isn't. It's the common thing here. Our prisoners escape by dozens. There's no keeping them. While the prisoners of the Allies never get away. Now, then, there is of course a very fine system, underground, of course, that takes care of these men. Where is it? We've been trying to find out for four years. This duty was given to me, the duty of discovering the system. Now listen carefully. How did you men get to Mariembourg from Anizy, and how did you get out of the railroad yard there?"

"Why, we jumped on a train," said Sheehan, "and when we got to the yard we walked out."

The officer gave a gesture of impatience.

"There are communication guards there as thick as flies. We next hear of you as assaulting Colonel Klaus. After that you disappeared. Where did you go?"

"I don't know, sir," said Sheehan. "We just wandered around in the fields."

"But didn't any one give you food?" asked the officer.

"No, sir."

"Where did you get those clothes?"

"Oh," said Sheehan, "them Belgians had scarecrows to scare the birds away from their fields and we just took the clothes off them."

The officer lost for a moment his composure.

"Do you think I'm a fool," he cried. "Well, maybe you do, but I'm not. You and your countrymen have that impression of the Germans, but I assure you it's wrong. You three think you are a clever crowd. How long do you suppose you can wander around assaulting officers and robbing houses without our finding it out? And you come into Brussels and air your views of the town in English in broad daylight. When you were in the house you were dumb enough. Your two friends are already dead. Are you going to talk or are we going to shoot you?"

"Ah," said Sheehan, "was that fellar a German? I knew it all along."

Sheehan felt a gloomy delight in finding that his suspicions had been justified.

"He put out too good food to be a Belgian. Bread and cheese. Why didn't he put us right in prison?"

The officer laughed.

"When we capture any of these escaped guests of ours we first take them to that house and leave them upstairs for a while. The walls have little holes in them that hold instruments for listening. We get a great deal of information that way. But this system still flourishes. It must be stamped out! When the war is over it will cease to operate and we'll never catch the scoundrels. But we want to, you see. We want to punish them for all the harm they've done."

"You said something about a job," remarked Sheehan. "About this other thing I don't know nothing. We walked and we ate what we could find and when we got here we didn't even know the name of the town."

"Oh, forget it," said the officer. "Just look at it in a business sense. Your company is out of business and you're getting a new job. Now, then, your duty is to your new employers. Who told you to come to Brussels, and what address did they give you to go to?"

"I ain't kidding you, sir," said Sheehan, "but if I was to fall down dead the next minute I couldn't tell you no different. We just came by ourselves."

"Come with me," said the officer.

He took Sheehan by the arm and led him into the corridor. They went down a cross passage, long and dark, and a guard, at the request of the officer, opened the door of a tiny room for them. The officer led Sheehan to a barred window.

"Look out," said he.

SHEEHAN applied his eye to the glass. There were a lot of men outside the window and lanterns bobbing. Then Sheehan saw that he was looking onto a court, that there were two of the men in white and that other men were tying them to something. A little farther off was a dark group, a twinkling of steel and the glow of what must be a cigaret.

"What's all this?" asked Sheehan.

"It's an execution," said the officer. "There's a court martial sits in that house by the gate. They work twenty-four hours a day and when a man is condemned, he's brought out here in the yard and finished. Spies meet a quick end here. Your two friends were brought here, tried and executed in half an hour."

Here, Sheehan, being weak from hunger, exhausted physically and mentally and confronted with a very unpleasant death, proceeded to faint away. The officer called to some guards and together they bore the American back to the small room where the officer had first met him, and after pouring a little liquor down his throat, left him. The officer smoked and waited for Sheehan to recover.

In a few minutes Sheehan blinked his eyes, coughed, and rolled over on his stomach.

"Ah, I knew it was a dream," he muttered thickly. "What time is it, Casey?"

Then, as his mind became clearer, he perceived the German officer's foot and his eye traveled that foot to the leg and so to officer's face.

"Well," said the officer, "what about it? Business is business. If you don't want the job some one else will. I can't wait here all night for you to make up your mind. I haven't been to bed yet and it's almost morning."

"What kind of a job is it?"

"Easy enough," said the officer. "You and I go back to the front, we let ourselves be captured by the Germans, and then we'll escape and find our way back here just as you did. I'll be along to see that the German soldiers don't recapture you, and you'll show me all the little places where you stopped on the way and ate and got your clothes and so on."

"Suppose we don't get captured. Maybe some rough soldier shoots us instead of taking us prisoner?"

"Oh, we aren't really going right to the front. Just up to some place where some men I know turn us over to some guards who will attach us to any prisoner column that happens to be around."

"But I was captured a long way from where the front is now," objected Sheehan.

"But you'll escape from the same camp at Anizy," said the officer. "We have to be careful about this and come all the way with a column from the front. I don't want the prisoners to have any suspicion that we're not what we seem. There's where you'll help out. I couldn't pass for an American private sholdier if I tried, but I can and will and have often passed as an officer of your army. So between the two of us we ought to pick up quite a lot of dope, but we've got to work fast, for the fighting may be over any minute. Well, come, are you going to work for me or not?"

"What's the salary?" asked Sheehan.

"The salary! Why, —— you, your life is the salary!"

"It ain't worth it!" said Sheehan. "You can go to ——. I won't do it."

"Very well," said the officer with tight lips.

He went to the door and beckoned. In stepped two German soldiers, helmeted with steel and with bayoneted rifles.

"Don't waste time with a firing squad," said the officer, "bayonet him. Take him out in the hall so you won't muss up my office."

"No! No!" shrieked Sheehan. "I was just kidding you. I'll do it."

"Good," said the officer. "I'll send you up some supper immediately."

The two helmeted men drew back and the man who had brought Sheehan down from the cell appeared from somewhere and taking the American by the arm, half led, half dragged him back to the cell. For a long while after the door had closed behind the guard, Sheehan sat in silence, biting his thumb.

"Business, is it?" he whispered to himself finally. "Maybe from me he will learn something about it."

True to his promise, the officer sent Sheehan up a fairly good supper, bean soup potatoes, bread, jam, and cigarets. There was also a bottle of something that tasted like caraway seed. This Sheehan consumed, and felt his courage rise.

So the genial Canadian that had led them to the house had been a boche spy after all. Nice boy. And they had been left there so that they would talk. Casey and Tom had been executed. Sheehan took a long drag at the caraway seed. Well, there was no more to be done that night. He lay down upon the bed, watched the gas flame some more and finally slept.

They aroused him at breakfast time after an uneasy night. Six distinct times he had awakened and decided it was a dream until the gas light would flare in his eyes or he would hear the ringing boom of the sentry on the gallery. And finally the guard had entered with some hot liquid that might be coffee, a hunk of bread, and a cigaret. The gas, turned off at some central point went out suddenly all over the prison. Sheehan drank the coffee, ate the bread until his jaws were weary and then smoked the cigaret.

"Business, is it, he wants?" he muttered. "If business starts, maybe we get somewhere."

They brought him dinner and, after an interminable time, the gas went on again and supper was brought in. They then hailed Sheehan downstairs again. The officer met him in the same little room.

"Feel better, I suppose," said the officer. "Well now put on this uniform, get a shave, and be ready to go with me in half an hour."

SHEEHAN returned, fresh from the hands of the prison barber and in an American uniform that fitted him as well as could be expected, which is to say that if he sneezed, the blouse just escaped falling off over his shoulders. The officer had by that time buttoned himself into a fur coat and he handed Sheehan a German overcoat and cap.

"Ready?" asked the officer.

"I wonder," began Sheehan diffidently, "if maybe there would be a needle around here. And a little thread."

"What for?"

"I got a wound stripe I'd like to sew on."

"Well, we haven't got time," began the officer. "Wait, now, that's not a bad idea. Here, can you do it yourself? I'll get the stuff."

They sent a guard hot foot to his quarters for the housewife every German soldier carries or is supposed to carry, and when he came back, still at the gallop, he bore needle and thread with which Sheehan deftly sewed on his wound stripe.

"I used to be in the cloaks and suits line," said he, eyeing the wound stripe with his head on one side, "but lately I been doing piece goods and vestings. Business is better in it. You don't get no dull season."

He put on his blouse and then took notice that there were three other officers in the room now, high-collared, hard-faced Prussians, such as one saw in pictures. They had a great deal of gold on their uniforms. Sheehan put on his overcoat and the five of them, Sheehan, the officer in the fur coat and the other three went out of the prison across the yard, through the iron gate that shut so silently and into a waiting automobile.

They went humming away through the night, back into the city. No one offered any word as to where they were going and Sheehan did not dare to ask. The car traveled at terrific speed, but the police seemed to pay no attention to it, other than to present arms once in a while.

It seemed ages since Sheehan had first wandered about those streets, and yet it had only been the night before. He could not repress a slight shiver every time they passed a patrol. They seemed to be crossing the entire city, but at last they swung away to the left across a canal, passed the very corner where Sheehan had first suspicioned the patrol was following him, and so on out through the suburbs.

Sheehan had just decided that they were going all the way back to the front in the car, when it came to an abrupt halt. A helmeted sentry inspected all those within and then waved the car on. After a few yards it again halted. The passengers made no move. Sheehan, who sat on a folding seat, felt some one seize him by the arm and give a vigorous shove, at the same time muttering angrily in German.

"Who the —— are you pushing?" inquired Sheehan.

"Get out," said Sheehan's friend. "Buck privates get out first and hold the door open."

"I thought the war was over," said Sheehan. "In business there ain't no privates and officers."

"Well," said the officer, "that may be, but wait until we get out of Germany before you begin to be a business man. The Germans are a little sensitive regarding military courtesy. Get out now, quickly, and hold open the door."

"When you hired me," began Sheehan, "there wasn't nothing said about holdin' doors—"

A strong hand here lifted Sheehan from the seat and rolled him like a bundle of rags to the ground. Before he could arise a foot committed further indignity on his person. However, he made no remark, but got to his feet rubbing himself.

"This is a good start," he said to himself. "It reminds me when I was a recruit."

The group of officers walked across a dark plain. There was a roaring barking sound, such as might be made by an extremely loud motor, and this noise increased in intensity as the group proceeded across the field. They came to a halt and the four Germans shrieked into each others' ears. Sheehan, almost deafened by the noise, looked to see where it came from. He happened to look up and there before his eyes was a long dim shape, like a fish. Two looks showed him what that dim shape was, it was the fuselage of an aeroplane and another look showed him the wings. Some intuition told Sheehan that he was to ride in this thing. He turned abruptly to walk away, but some one, perhaps the chauffeur of the car, had been standing right behind him and this person seized him in a grip of steel.

"Where are you going?" yelled the officer in his ear.

"Are you going to make me ride in that thing?" asked Sheehan.

"Certainly. Come, get in. I'll give you a hand."

"The deal is off," yelled Sheehan. "This you said was business. Well, I resign. I would rather be shot than fall out of that thing. I seen them things come down. Splash they go. Not on your life!"

Sheehan's feet were swept from under him in response to an order in German, his hands were tied tightly and he was lifted bodily into the airplane, where he could feel himself being strapped in. Some one fitted a pair of goggles over his eyes, the roar of the motor became deafening, and he felt the plane move under him. It was dark and the goggles blinded him. He had no idea when the plane left the ground, nor at what height they were flying. He remembered having read somewhere that there was no sensation on leaving the ground. How long would it take them to get to their destination whatever it was?

"And suppose a anti-aircraft shoots us down?" thought Sheehan.

He comforted himself by the fact that the anti-aircraft shells never seemed to worry an airman the slightest. He was frightened, giddy and cold, while wind tore at his overcoat. His cap had long ago left him.

Sheehan fully believed they had been in the air all night, when the plane came to a bumping halt and shouting announced their arrival. It was several minutes before Sheehan was lifted out of the cockpit and, his hands still tied, carried a short distance and laid on the car of a narrow-gauge train.

"Hey," yelled Sheehan as the train started, "where do we go now? Untie my hands."

There was no answer, no sound save the gentle clicking of the wheels. Across the fields they clattered, seemingly for hours. It began to rain for the first time since Sheehan had been captured. All the water that had been saved up in the sky all that time seemed suddenly let loose. Lightning zigzagged across the sky and Sheehan became aware of water running down inside his coat collar. He called again, but received no answer. He was alone in his car and could not see into the others. His wrists began to pain him.

THEY stopped again after a time and Sheehan could hear men walking and discussing something in angry tones.

"How's chances on getting out of here?" called Sheehan.

Several heads looked over the car and Sheehan finally recognized one as his officer friend, distinguishable by his fur coat and aviator's helmet.

"Come," said Sheehan, "how's to untie my wrists? This is a —— of a way to treat a business associate. I am wet to my back teeth from the rain."

Sheehan sensed that his officer was in a towering rage; he could tell by the tone in which he spoke to the other Germans. They dragged Sheehan forth, however, untied his wrists and hustled him across a hard road into what Sheehan thought was a house, but from the entrance he had to descend six or seven steps before he reached a door. This door was opened and Sheehan was shoved in. Then they left him.

Once alone Sheehan rubbed his sore wrists, stretched his aching legs and then looked about him. He was in a long narrow room, one that was evidently part of some unfinished construction, for the wall was but half finished and a bucket of sand and various mason tools still lying about showed that work was going on. Wires trailed from the roof, where evidently electric lighting was in process of installation, but it was not yet working, for two German soldiers who sat at a long desk got their light from a kerosene lamp, very plainly a piece of loot from some French house. A desk? Sheehan looked closer. No, that was a telephone switchboard. The two Germans worked away at it, plugging in and plugging out from time to time. It seemed that it was a quiet night.

A sudden thought went through Sheehan. If he and the officer were to be prisoners, then they must be somewhere near the front line. What was to prevent Sheehan from stepping over that line and returning to his own troops? The men at the switchboard had not paid him the slightest attention. Sheehan arose as nonchalantly as he could and pushed open the door. He felt his way along the passage on the other side until he came to the steps.

"Grrumph!" said a deep voice.

"It's a wet night, ain't it?" said Sheehan.

Then he turned and went back down the passage. There was a big Hun with a bayoneted rifle at the top of the steps.

Inside the dugout the telephone men seemed to be working a little more actively. They muttered to each other and kept shaking their heads. There was a dull sound that reminded Sheehan of a man dropping a trunk on a station platform. On the heels of it a clatter and the sound of some one cursing. The door flew open and the sentry thrust in his head. Before he had time to speak a distant voice floated in over his shoulder.

"You little ——! Come out of there!"

Sheehan arose, for he recognized the officer's voice. The sentry turned and clattered back along the passage and Sheehan followed him. Outside the dugout day was just breaking, a cold and rainy dawn. Everything was in that ghostly half light in which things can be seen, but yet not distinctly. The dugout was off a road and on this road men moved about hurriedly.

Wop! Wop! Wop! No sound but bursting shells could make that noise. A man came out of a dugout putting on an overcoat, another frantically scanned a map with a flashlight, a third sent men running in different directions. The place became more animated. Two men kindled a fire and began burning paper in it. More men appeared, officers by their appearance, buttoning their coats, and slinging field glasses about their necks.

"Come, let's get out of here," said a voice, and Sheehan felt some one take him by the arm. It must be his officer. They went down the road a way, just as a wild howl echoed to the skies and a shell landed with a sullen slap.

"Oh, gas!" cried Sheehan.

"No," said the officer, "that was a dud. Look out!"

Five or six more shells arrived that were not duds and every one of them burst in the road.

"Now see what we've gotten into!" said the officer bitterly. "Mind you, I had this thing all planned, but some one who knew better decided he'd take a hand. That's why we came up to this dirty hole instead of staying back at the flying field. We've run into a raid."

Up the road a small cloud of dark figures began to move across. The officer muttered in German. Sheehan watched fascinated. *Bang!* White smoke rolled in clouds. Nothing on earth would make that sound but a bursting grenade, thought Sheehan, and his heart began to beat at tremendous speed. Those must be Americans down the road. They were bombing the dugouts!

"Now, don't do anything indiscreet," said a very chill cold voice, and a chill cold something nestled into Sheehan's neck under his ear.

The men up the road continued their labors. They were Americans, no doubt of it whatever.

"Come outta that, Fritz," they called. "Chew on on that a while, jerry." And a grenade would explode shortly afterward. "Put down that gun or I'll knock you for a month's leave!"

The shells cracked in the woods on the far side of the road now and the dark figures grew fewer and fewer, then disappeared entirely. Daylight was coming with leaps and bounds and Sheehan could even see the color of the uniforms of the last of the men up the road.

"I thought the war was over," said Sheehan.

"So it would be," snarled the officer, "if it wasn't for you and your —— countrymen. I don't want another word from you."

He struck Sheehan suddenly and knocked him sprawling. Then he proceeded to kick him to his feet.

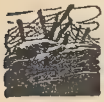
"A false move and you're dead!" said the officer, waving his pistol.

Then the officer took off his fur coat and thrust it into some bushes. Sheehan gasped. He had forgotten their mission and he was astonished to see the other in an American officer's uniform.

"Let's get out of here," said the German and he started across the road, still menacing Sheehan with his pistol.

They drove their way through some wet bushes, crossed a patch of pine trees and came out on the edge of a field. The officer began to swear in German and English. Here the two of them instinctively ducked back to the pines again. There was a very nice barrage cracking and banging in that field and across the field, where there were more pines, the shell flashes were thrown into high relief by the darkness behind them. It was a chilling sight. It grew more chilling, for little groups of men began to appear here and there, flowing steadily across the field, their progress marked by the steady explosions of grenades.

"I think we've stumbled on to a drive," remarked the officer. "Let's think a minute."



WITH all the appearance of a stage effect a man rose from behind a bush not a yard away from them. Sheehan looked quickly around. While he and the officer had been watching the field the grove had been gradually filling with men and now there were half a dozen within ten yards, while more could be seen flitting from tree to tree. They had bayoneted rifles, they wore absurdly short slickers, their helmets were over one ear, and many of them chewed solemnly. They were Americans. It was dark in there, but Sheehan was certain. The British wore the same pattern trench helmet, the British carried the same gas mask, but the British did not wear that absurd slicker, nor did the British chew tobacco.

Bang! A hot flame seared Sheehan's cheek. The officer had fired his pistol, but he had fired it at Sheehan.

"Hey!" yelled Sheehan, "grab him, he's a boche spy!"

The officer's pistol cracked again and Sheehan began to run at his best speed. An American arose from somewhere and made a savage thrust at Sheehan with his bayonet. Sheehan dodged it by a frantic leap, slipped and fell. He was on his feet in an instant, but shouts rang in his ears. "Git the little boche! Don't shoot him, you'll hit some one! Stick a bayonet in him!"

Then Sheehan remembered he was still wearing his German overcoat. He had it off in less than two seconds, just as two men advanced upon him with thirsty bayonets.

"Lay off me," cried Sheehan, "I'm a Yank!"

The two stopped with hanging jaws. Here they were about to slay a boche and he stood up in an American uniform.

"Shoot him, he's a spy!" cried a voice. "Shoot that man!"

The German officer, looking very much like an American, pointed an accusing finger at Sheehan.

"It's a liar!" shrieked Sheehan. "I belong to the Americans. Look at my wound stripe!"

Here indeed was a diversion for the attackers. A crowd began to gather—any excuse for a moment's respite from the attack was welcome—and the two men, Sheehan and the officer, were gradually inclosed.

The Americans looked just as soberly at the officer as they did at Sheehan. The latter looked carefully at the officer to see if there were any more hostile motions of the pistol, but the officer's hands were empty. His pistol had been of German make and when things began to get serious he had let it slide unobtrusively behind a bush. It was getting lighter all the time, even in the pines, and an American officer might have trouble explaining why he had shot another American with a German pistol, both shooter and shootee being unknown to the company.

"Get going, men," called a voice. "Move out! You're loosing the barrage. What the —— do you mean by letting these men halt, sergeant?"

A young officer, his trench coat in shreds and his helmet on the back of his head, appeared suddenly. The sergeant, by way of excuse, mentioned that they had captured a spy.

"A spy!" cried the officer, "where is he?"

"Well, sir, I don't know," said the sergeant doubtfully. "There's two of 'em and each claims the other—"

"This man here just took off a German overcoat," spoke up some one, "an' he said that major there was a German officer."

"Ah!" said the officer. "Well, Johnson and Kelty take him back to the battalion P.C. Now then, Major, I wonder what you're doing in this sector. You won't mind my asking you what regiment you are with?"

This the lieutenant said as respectfully as he could, but there was a hard ring in his tones. The German officer thought quickly if there was any way out. He knew the names of the commanding officers of nearly every unit in the American army, when they had come to France, and all about them, but he had no idea as to what unit this was that had taken him. And a wrong statement, the statement that he belonged to some unit that might very well have been relieved, would be fatal. Moreover, in the last few weeks he had been on duty that did not keep him in touch with American troop movements, so he was hopelessly at a loss. However, the high hand might save him yet.

"I'm with the general staff," said the German, "detailed to observe the conduct of this action. Further than that I don't care to discuss it with you."

The lieutenant took a look at his fast disappearing barrage and spoke feelingly to the men. They began to go away one by one. The lieutenant observed that this strange officer looked as though he belonged to the general staff, he was not plastered with mud as the lieutenant was, his uniform was correct, except that he had no collar ornaments, but this meant nothing during an action. But the lieutenant had never heard of the general staff sending a man out with troops. The staff usually did its observing from some place at least as far away as division headquarters.

"You might show me your identity card," said the lieutenant apologetically.

"I'll see you in —— first," said the other officer.

The lieutenant waved his hand.

"Here, Corporal Mullins, take Fraschini and Smith and take this officer back to Major Kent. And if he tries to get away, you have my authority to shoot him, and if he gets away, you have my authority to shoot yourselves. If you don't, I will!"

"I'll have you broken for this," said the mysterious major.

"Well, it'll be worth it," grinned the lieutenant. "I don't get a chance to take a crack at the general staff every day. You can put in your report how we handle suspicious characters at the front. Come, men, take the lead out of your shoes. We're a mile behind the barrage."

The lieutenant trotted after the last of his men and left the German and the three Americans looking at each other.

The corporal coughed in an embarrassed manner.

"Well, if the major is ready—" he suggested.

"Do you realize you're getting yourself into a lot of trouble, corporal?" asked the strange major.

"Well, sir, the major heard what the lootenant said."

"Never mind what the lieutenant said. Listen to me. You turn around and come back to the front with me. I'll soon show you I'm who I claim to be. I'll take the responsibility."

"The lootenant would kill us," said one of the men.

"Suppose the lieutenant is killed in the advance," suggested the major, "then you have no one to defend you if I put you under arrest."

"The major can tell Major Kent all about it," said the corporal. "And if it's all right, Major Kent will probably give the major his side car to go back to the front in."

"Well, I'm not going back with you, you may be sure of that!" snapped the mysterious major.

Here the corporal grinned and his thumb clicked off the safety of his rifle.

"If you shoot me, it's murder," said the major. "You'll all hang."

Again the corporal grinned. The German looked at the other two. There was an eager light in their eyes, too. They didn't get a chance to let drive at a major every day either. The German gave a slight shudder. This affair was beginning to become serious. There was a sudden crashing of bushes and two excited men burst into view, followed by a third.

"Hey, corporal!" cried the first, "this guy claims he's outta our outfit! Waddyuh know about that?"

"You better take better care of him or you'll be out of an outfit yourself," remarked the corporal. "What's to prevent him from takin' his foot in his hand and smokin' away through the brush?"

The two excited men here turned. They were the men that had been sent out with Sheehan, and Sheehan himself panted behind them. They went back now, very carefully, and took him by each arm.

"Did you ever hear of a guy called Sergeant Joyce?" asked one of Sheehan's guards.

"No," said the corporal, "he never was in this outfit."

"He was, too," said Sheehan. "He was

in it in the old army. He was killed last winter."

"Well, I don't know him," said the corporal. "I didn't come to the outfit until just before Cantigny. Don't go, Major!"

The last he said very coldly and distinctly. The major, who had been edging toward a clump of bushes, stopped abruptly.

"Come on," said the corporal, "let's stop this monkey business. These two birds go back to the P.C. and if Major Kent wants to turn 'em loose he can. And I hope they try to get away. If they do, it'll save us a long walk to the P.C. and back."

THE command post of the battalion was in the café of a tiny village just over the hill. It was quite crowded, for the brigadier had come up with his staff on a personal visit to the advanced units, and at the announcement that a guard was outside with two supposed spies, the room buzzed with excitement.

"Bring them in," said the brigadier.

He lighted a fresh cigar. In tramped the guard, headed by the corporal, and in their midst were Sheehan and the German.

"Are these your spies?" asked the brigadier with disgust.

Here was a very small and dirty private and a very clean and snappy looking major, both in American uniform.

"I ain't no spy," spoke up the dirty private. "I used to belong to this outfit. I was with the second division last winter."

"Oh," said the brigadier. "Well, we'll look into that in a minute. Where did you get these men, corporal?"

The corporal related the circumstances of the finding of the two suspicious characters in the woods, and when he had finished, the general directed him to take his men and rejoin his outfit.

"And all the officers here below field rank, go out into the bar room. Now then," went on the brigadier, "let's have it. You, private, what were you doing up there in the woods? I'll examine this private first, Major, and get him out of the way."

The brigadier had his eye on the major's feelings and for this reason he had sent out all the junior officers and was going to examine Sheehan first, so that juniors would not see a higher officer heckled about.

"Sir," said Sheehan, "I was captured by them Germans, and got away." He went into detail regarding the attack, his escape, his recapture and his return to the front with the German.

"Interesting if true," said the brigadier. "Did you say you used to be with this division last winter? Who do you know in it?"

"Well, sir, there was a man named 'Glass-Eye,' there was one named Tucker, there was Sergeant Joyce, and Cole, and lots of them I knew."

"Well, how about officers?"

"Ah," said Sheehan, "there was a lieutenant named Webster, what they called 'Little Brother.' "

"This is serious, gentlemen," said the brigadier, looking sternly around, for some of the officers had begun to laugh audibly. "Major Kent, do you know any of these men?"

"Lieutenant Webster was wounded last winter and the other men I never heard of except Joyce and Cole, who were old-timers. Joyce was killed in action near Toul and Cole was badly wounded at Cantigny."

Sheehan named some more, like Rip van Winkle inquiring for his friends on his return from his twenty years' sleep. And like Rip's friends, Sheehan's were all gone. Some had been killed, others evacuated for wounds or sickness, sent home as instructors or transferred to other outfits. The officers had all been killed, promoted or sent to Blois.

"Well the story can be investigated," said the general. "Meanwhile we'll keep him under heavy guard. Now then, Major, I'll hear you."

The German officer had been sitting in a chair throughout Sheehan's examination, but now he stood up and faced them all. He was a Prussian, this officer, a man who had spent most of his life in the United States and he knew the psychology of the Americans as well as any one could who was not native born. He knew that they shrank from inflicting death in cold blood, and that nothing availed a man so much as a frank avowal of guilt and the appearance of being a brave man, crushed by force of circumstance, but still fighting.

"General," said the German, "I'll save you some valuable time. I'm a major, it's true, but not in your army. I am Major Count Rohrbeck, some time of the Guard Rifle Battalion, but now of the intelligence section of the imperial general staff."

When the general had quelled the excitement he re-lighted his cigar, and proceeded.

"You know, of course, Major, what this means?"

"Certainly," said the German.

He did, too. As long as he was not turned over to the French, it meant nothing.

"Well, then, let's be truthful. What was this other man doing with you?"

"He came down with me from Belgium. He's a deserter from your army."

"Well, is it true that you brought him down here on such a feeble excuse that you wanted to find out who was feeding escaped prisoners and you wanted him to show you where he had been fed?"

"Well, that was partly it," smiled the German. "But there was something else. There was a man that we wanted very, very badly to get and our information was that he was in charge of one of the houses where these prisoners were being sheltered. And I was taking a chance that either we'd find the house or some of the people that we got a line on might tell us where it was. It's a long chance, but those are the kind the Intelligence has to take."

"What's your answer to that?" the general asked Sheehan sternly.

"General," said the little man, "I ain't no soldier. But when a man begins to talk about business to me I understand him. This man made me a proposition. Business, this is, he said. And in business, General, a man goes on the idea that everything the other fellar says is a lie. So when this here German said that Casey and Tom had been shot and when he said the war was over and Paris captured and all that and when he told his gang—in English, mind you, General—to take me out and bayonet me, I decided it wouldn't do no one good for me to get killed. And he might be telling me lies. In business a man has got to think that sometimes the other fellar is maybe not so truthful as George Washington."

"Did you shoot the other two?" asked the general, turning to the German.

"No," said the German, "as far as I know they got away. Our first information was that these three were killed in the explosion. Then we found they had assaulted a guard and escaped. We didn't know then who they were, but after a time, by checking lists and identifying the bodies of the men who were killed, we learned. About then came report that a colonel in command of a farm district had been assaulted by Belgian or British soldiers. That same day we got a report that the three were seen on a railroad train in Belgium, but escaped before we could get them. Then they dropped from sight until a report from one of our agents in Brussels came in that a man we had been watching had been seen talking to three tough looking characters.

"Our man lost them in the darkness, but we'd had our eye on a house near the *abattoir* for some time and we guessed it was there they had gone. We waited a day or so to see if we couldn't catch a bigger bag, but no more went in, so we raided the place. Their supper was still on the table, but they were gone. About ten o'clock that night I got word that my little friend here was in Saint Gilles, so I went right down. He fitted into my plans in wonderful style."

"Well," said the general, "we'll check up on this through other sources of course. The weak point in the story is that this private, by his own admission, agreed to help the officer."

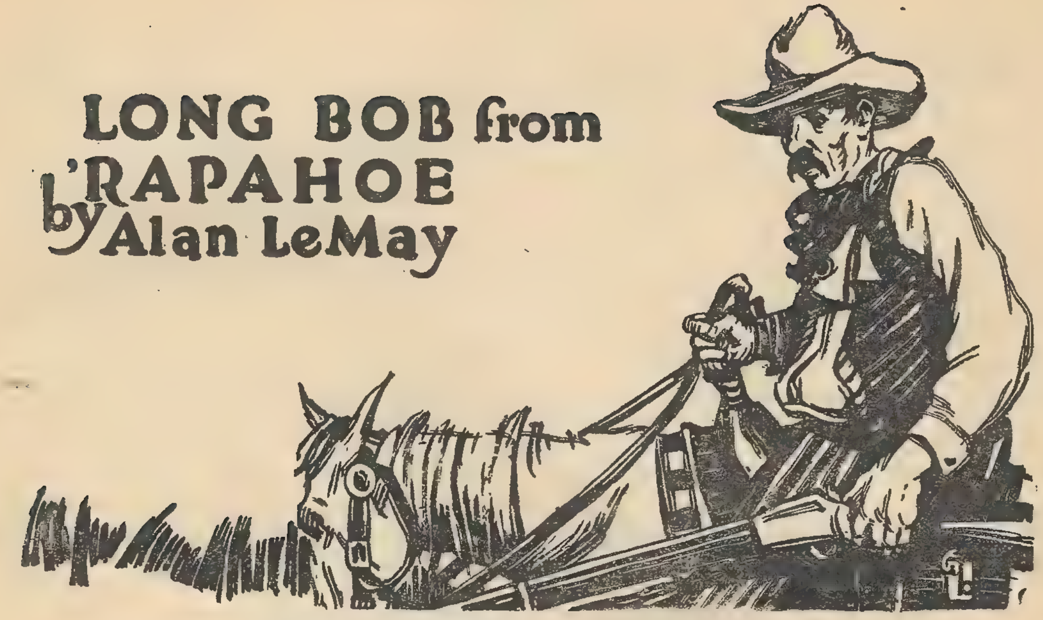
"Well, sir," said Sheehan, "I didn't know what I would do, but he said it was to be business and I knew I would fix that fellar some way."

"You must have had a lot of confidence in yourself," observed the general.

"Ah," said Sheehan, and he laughed for the first time since he had been in the army. "In business gives it the first rule, 'You can't beat a kike.' "

LONG BOB from 'RAPAHOE

by Alan LeMay



Author of "Strange Fellers," "The Contest Man," etc.

THE little clump of sage trembled almost imperceptibly, and a narrow path slowly parted at its roots, as if to permit the passage of a snake. Instead of a snake, the dull blue muzzle of a rifle silently slid through, poked its nose a fraction of an inch beyond the outermost stem and came to rest.

Behind the clump of sage and the rifle, his narrow, knotty body stretched out to an abnormal length in the dust, lay "Long Bob," the man from 'Rapahoe—and other points north, south, east and west. The man was ill-proportioned; the shoulders that braced the rifle butt were narrow and bent, and his neck was short and scraggly. But the green, shaggy-browed eyes, in spite of the intensity of their squint down the rifle barrel, were shrewd and kindly.

Scarcely twenty long strides down hill from the business end of the rifle, on the edge of Spider Gully, lay a hog-tied steer. By the side of the steer, with one knee in the animal's ribs, crouched an angular, lean-shouldered man, in overalls and slouch hat. The black beard that covered his face to the eyes seemed not so much intentional as the result of failure to shave. With head on one side and tongue screwed up in the corner of his mouth, he was etching the side of the steer with a broken knife.

Occasionally the animal raised its head from the ground to bellow and reach for the man with its horns, while its legs worked frantically in a restricted simulation of running. Since the steer was on its side, with its feet tied in a bunch, these heroic efforts to leave took no effect.

There is nothing like a half-changed brand, showing both the true brand and the alteration intended, for evidence in a cattle lifting case. In the dust behind his sage Long Bob lay motionless, waiting for the exact stage in the work of the other which would serve Bob's purpose best.

He of the beard rested a moment, sweeping the horizon with watchful eyes. He studied his work thoughtfully, scratching his head. He sat down on the ground behind the steer, bent low over the brand—then, suddenly, he was no longer there.

Long Bob's finger twitched convulsively on the trigger as the man disappeared, but he did not immediately fire. The suspect, having spotted the rifle in the sage, had simply dropped to his side behind the steer, then rolled over the edge of the wash into Spider Gully.

With admirable foresight, Long Bob shifted the muzzle of his rifle slightly to the left and shot the steer through the head. It was the first step in the setting of a trap; if the steer were alive its continued bellowing might attract an angry rescue party of more steers, inconveniencing Long Bob. Or, since it might attract investigating riders, the persistent bellowing might prevent the rustler from coming back in an attempt to destroy evidence. A shot now would tell the other nothing, since it would seem to have been intended for the man.

A scurry of hoofs in the wash brought word that the bearded man was mounted and starting for parts unknown. Presently a little drift of dust rose from the gully as the hoofbeats gradually died away.

Turning on his side, Bob got out a plug of tobacco and bit off a sparing chew. Presently his tightly-clamped lips relaxed in resignation, and he set to work.

Resting on one elbow and keeping low to the ground, he scooped up handfuls of dust and flung it over his boots and dark corduroy pants. The effect of this was to make him practically invisible from any considerable distance. But he went further; stabbing the ground with his knife, he stuck up little plumes of sage about his exposed legs, not solidly, but here and there to break the outline. The rest of his body was already well concealed in the clump.

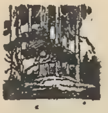
Next he scooped shallow hollows in the ground beneath his hips and shoulders and loosened the two-inch straps of his spurs. That was for comfort. Then he made a close examination of the country.

The even, deceptively flat looking expanse of the plain lay on all sides of him, bright tan in the midday sun. Apparently nothing could move on that plain unseen; but the watcher knew well how much could be hid among the slight swells and sags of ground, let alone in the occasional gullies. Only a few miles to the west of him the foothills rolled up, clothed in somber green where the mouth of cañons broke their front; and beyond rose the mountains, implacable and serene. A naked crag glowed in colors of orange, maroon, and the purple blue that distance gives.

High in a sky so blazing-blue as to be unbearable to the eye, a lone vulture hovered, an apparently motionless dot. He saw the man and the steer; but it would be hours before he would allow himself to sink on motionless wings to look more closely, for dead things wait; and vultures have the patience of the living dead.

Long Bob turned on his back, drew his hat over his eyes, and lay still. Presently an infant prairie dog climbed the upturned toe of his boot, and sat there as erect as a peg. Then, suddenly understanding the strange warning his nose had given him in the first place, he fell off with a faint shriek, and went away.

Bob slept.



FIVE miles away, and several hundred feet higher up, two mounted figures sat their horses on the jutting brow of a cliff. Behind them the scattering of silent pines made a screen of broken light and shade that made the men and horses extremely hard to see from below in the plain.

"That's what you claim," said "Dixie" Kane, the younger of the two. He was a slender, blue-eyed cowboy with thin cheeks and high, thin nose. "I say you're fulla beans as big as balloons."

"Squirty" Wallace, a small man with legs as bowed as if they had been plastered to his horse while still wet, turned slow, calm eyes upon his companion.

"Go ahead," he retorted, "be a child."

"Every little stiff that wears a four-punch hat ain't necessarily a top hand," flared Dixie Kane.

"No," agreed Squirty, looking meaningly at Dixie's Stetson, "I guess that's right."

The two lounged sidewise in their saddles to regard each other with that superficial hostility only practicable to men who have ridden together on many a long trail.

"If you'd ride a horse, once, instead o' some kid's go-cart on three legs, like that there, we might get somethin' done sometime," Dixie commented.

For reply Squirty looked slowly from his own sleepy, ewe-necked buckskin to Dixie's nervous, upstanding sorrel. There were marks of dried lather at the edge of Dixie's saddle blanket, and Squirty lifted the corner of his buckskin's blanket to expose the dry, cool hide beneath.

"I ain't sayin' that jar-head o' yours mightn't hold out, if ridden proper," he said. "Trouble is, fer every mile he covers o' actchel ground, he goes two mile up and down, or three mile all told. Yer plan o' standin' in the stirrups to take the weight off his back ain't goin' to work. He—"

"He anyways picks up his feet," said Dixie dryly.

"I guess they hurt him. Or mebbe the ground's too hot for 'em, they bein' kinda tender. That ain't a horse yuh got under yuh—it's jest a plain, common case o' the skitter-fidgets. Now if I— Whatsamatter?"

"Who's 'at?"

Squirty Wallace followed Dixie's gaze out over the tops of the swiftly dwindling pine below, to the plain where the heat devils danced, shimmering, transparent ghosts that forever rippled upward. He made out a crawling speck; and, making tubes of his hands to shut out the superabundance of light, he studied the moving object intently.

The crawling speck was a ridden horse, galloping strongly away from the neighborhood of Spider Gully. Apparently the horse was galloping through a broad sheet of water, fetlock deep; the image of the man and horse, tiny in the distance, but peculiarly distinct, was reflected clearly on the surface of the bright expanse. However, the wet appearance of the mirage-water could not dampen down the dust, and the little smoky cloud that trailed up behind the horse gave the show away.

"Looks like Joe Edwards on Skeeter," suggested Dixie.

"Yeah, don't it?" Squirty agreed sarcastically. "Only for the color o' his eyes. It looks a whole lot similar to yer grandmother, ridin' on a cow, too. At this distance I couldn't swear it weren't either one. An' neither could you!"

"Squirty," said Dixie suddenly, "look how he's ridin'. There's some monkey business goin' on down there."

"Six to one that gink knows more about our missin' Triangle R stock than he's aimin' to put down in writin'," guessed Squirty.

Dixie pondered.

"Let's foller him up an' see where he's headin'," he burst out.

"'Druther back track and see where he's comin' from."

"What's the good?"

Squirty shot tobacco juice twelve feet out and a hundred feet down.

"That way we find out somethin' useful, thus improvin' ourselves maybe. Other way we learn nothin', prob'ly get shot, and die ignorant. Ain't nothin' more useless than a dead cowboy. Less'n maybe it's a live one that won't listen to good sense. Meanin'—"

"If you'd show some spunk about takin' care o' the Triangle R, which is payin' yuh good jack fer yer wuthless efforts," began Dixie hotly. Then, more quietly, "Come on, Squirty, let's cut that guy off. If he don't act nice, that proves he's the guy we want. An' we'll take him. Otherwise nothin' lost."

"Thanks kindly," said Squirty, "but not me. I gotta know what I'm doin' first."

"Then I'll do it myself—" snapped Dixie Kane, wheeling his horse suddenly—"an' to —— with yuh!"

He slapped in the spurs, his slender body bending gracefully to the motion of the horse as the animal tried to jump out from under him.

A grin-line creased Squirty's leather cheek from eye to jaw as he watched Dixie go.

"Go ahead," he shouted, "be a child!"

"Be a —— old lady!" came back the wrathful retort as Dixie Kane disappeared.

The ewe-necked buckskin, as if in accord with his rider, turned his neck to look after the other horse with mildly surprized tolerance. Then quiet descended again.

SQUIRTY leisurely rolled a cigaret of bitter brown paper and cut-plug, twirling the end shut with thumb and finger as he stuck it in his mouth. He lighted it absent-mindedly, studying the crooked line of Spider Gully, winding over the plain out there below. Something looked interesting on the gully's edge, far away; so far off that he couldn't tell wether it were a fallen man, a steer or a drift of sage. The match end scorched his fingers and he blew it out with a puff of smoke. Then he turned the buckskin with a gentle urge of his legs and rode off at a long, shambling walk—in the direction opposite to that Dixie had taken.

IT was almost sundown when Squirty reached the dead and hog-tied steer that lay by Spider Gully.

"Somebody certainly aims to have this steer remain," was his first thought, as he noted the hog-tied legs that supplemented the bullet-hole through the head.

He stooped to examine the scraped hair brand, fresh but complete, on the steer's side. It was the brand of his own outfit—the Triangle R.

For a few moments Squirty pondered as to why the brand should be a freshly scraped brand and why the steer was hog-tied as well as shot. No solution occurred to him. But one thing was clear—somebody had killed a Triangle R steer.

"We're goin' to wake up some mornin'

an' find we got a complete outfit, with jest one thing lackin'—critters," he grumbled to himself. "Some people are carryin' this thing to a ridic'lous extreme."

Suddenly he straightened up and listened. It seemed to him that he had heard the unmistakable sound of a soft snore. For several moments he listened, peering about him, but the sound was not repeated. Then, swiftly, he drew his knife and skinned out a neat square of hide to include the brand. It would make evidence and would prevent the cattle killer from cutting out the brand and burying it. He rolled up the square of fresh hide and tied it on his saddle.

"Put 'em up—rifle!" said a deep bass voice behind him.

That last cold, businesslike word quelled Squirty's initial impulse to fight. The deep voice carried something convincing in it, as well as informative. Squirty put 'em up.

"Walk back'ards towards me—stop figurin' t' turn 'round!"

Squirty walked backward, being careful not to stumble, lest he draw fire.

"Stop! Unbuckle yore gun with yore left hand, an' drap it on the ground, an' put yore hand up agin!"

The helpless Triangle R puncher did exactly as he was told.

Long Bob from 'Rapahoe had wakened, as he had expected to, to find some one tampering with the steer he watched. His assumption had been that whoever had planked an illegal brand on that "critter" would presently come back, when all was quiet, to see what the signs were and, if possible, to destroy the evidence.

A flash of disappointment had come to him when he saw that his disturber was not the bearded man in overalls, but a wiry, bow-legged figure in chaps. Further, Squirty was clean-shaved, and from under his hat protruded rusty chestnut hair, in marked contrast to the blackness of his eyes. Not the same party that had put on the brand—not similar at all.

Long Bob at once leaped to a conclusion. The rustler had sent back a partner—one who had not been seen there before, and who, if caught, could therefore profess complete ignorance of what was going on.

"Yo're under arrest," Long Bob told Squirty Wallace. "Best come quiet. Bullets is easy t' throw in, an' a turrible nuisance to pick out."

"Who the —— are you?" demanded Squirty.

"Depity sher'ff."

"Since when?"

"Tuesday week. We'll have less o' this liftin' o' Triangle R stock."

"Triangle R stock! Say, I been ridin' this range fer—"

"Yo're goin' t' git a vacation from it now. Less talk! Yuh bucked the wrong outfit oncet. Where's that brand?"

He took the roll of fresh hide from Squirty's saddle and stuck it in his back pocket; then buckled the puncher's gun belt over his own. He mounted Squirty's horse.

"Set me afoot, will yuh?" foamed Squirty Wallace. "Kill a Triangle R cow. Hold up a Triangle R hand. Steal a Triangle R horse. You've hit the end o' yer rope, mister. You're so close to finished right now that daylight can't get in between you an' yer troubles. Yer neck ain't worth the paper it's printed on, an'—"

"Shut up. Walk ahead quiet, an' mebbe you'll live to see jail agin. Yuh only got to walk far's my horse."

Boiling inwardly, his face flushed darker than his rusty hair, Squirty Wallace walked obediently ahead of Long Bob to the place where the latter's round-barreled bay horse was hid. There Long Bob made Squirty tie the bay's head short to the tail of the buckskin.

"Thar!" said Bob. "Less'n that tail pulls out, I reckon these horses'll stay tolerable close together. Good thing horse tails is screwed in nowadays, 'stead o' jest driven in, like they used to make 'em. I c'n remember when them tails pulled out all the time, an' we'd have to drive 'em back in, usin' glue an' paper, to wedge 'em—"

"Aw, dry up!"

"—but that was afore horses was standardized. In them days—" the deep, drawling voice droned on—"thar wan't no sech thing as spare parts. If'n a horse lost his leg, say, you'd hafta throw away the whole horse. When yuh wrote t' th' factory fer a new leg, they'd allus write back that yore horse was a odd size, or mebbe th' wrong make, an' parts fer it was out o' stock. O' course—"

They were now mounted, each on his own horse, and riding toward the hills at an easy trot.

"Blither, blather, blither, blather," moaned Squirty Wallace. "Go right ahead

—yuh got me where yuh want me. But jest remember this—there's things no man's got to stand fer, even if he ain't armed."

A twinkle came into Long Bob's eyes as he fell silent. He parted his iron-gray mustache and sparingly fed himself a little more eating tobacco. Presently, his face serious and thoughtful, he began to sing. It was an old hymn, its grammar a little warped by long travel; but essentially the same, nevertheless, here in the vast glow of the sunset over mountains and plains, as it had been once in a little New England church, among the rocks of littler, older hills.

"Rock of Ages, ope fer me,
Leave me hide myself in thee!"

"That's what I say," agreed Squirty Wallace irreverently.

He rolled himself a cigaret.

THEY rode on and on; presently as the afterglow faded, they were winding into the foothills again. Squirty was leading the way in the leisurely, aimless fashion dictated by the other, riding a tail's length behind Squirty with rifle carried casually but suggestively in the crook of his arm.

"Prob'ly we're goin' up here t' play snipe hunt, or somethin' sensible like that," commented Squirty, who had now resigned himself to a sort of embittered enjoyment of the situation. "O' course, a ordinary man might think a feller had a right to know where to he was goin'. But natcherly, a cheap, low-down, bush-whackin' cross between a—"

"Yuh never asked me," said the long man mildly. "But, seein's yo're all het up over a little insignif'cant point like 'Whar at is our destinootion,' I don't mind tellin' yuh. I mind when I was a kid, down East, whar I come from oncet, they used t' git off a story that went somethin' like this: It seems that some feller had a horse, which same he vallyed highly. Wall, this horse, he went t' work an' run off an' lost hisself. So—"

"What is this," demanded Squirty, "the children's hour or somethin'?"

"Somethin'. So bimeby this feller, when he see th' horse ain't goin' to bring hisself back, he puts up a reward. Wall, everybody takes a look, but no luck. Then th' village idjut, he—"

"Was you him?"

"—he goes out an' brings back th' horse. An' they asks him how come he to find it, an' he says, 'Wall, I figgered whar'd I go was I a horse, an' I went thar, an' th' horse had!' Wall, thar's a moral to that. An'—"

"The moral being that the village idjut prob'ly stole the horse in the first place," guessed Squirty. "I guess you was him, all right."

"An' o' late years, sence I been pickin' up a meal here an' thar as a cow deteckatif, I been able to use that idear a lot. An' I be figgerin' on whar at would yore pardner rustler be 'long 'bout now. I figger he'd be doublin' back. Mebbe he thinks I'd likely take out arter him. That'd make this neck o' the woods middlin' safe. So mebbe he's ridin' along here somewhars, doublin' back, yuh see. An' mebbe we'll run on to him."

"In which case there'll prob'ly be shootin' back'ards an' for'ards, with me in the middle," Squirty Wallace suggested. "Fine dope."

"Gener'ly speakin', I most allus figger some way to git round the shootin' part," drawled the deep voice behind him. "O' course, if you was to go to work an' try to gum up my layout, thar'd likely be some shootin'. You bein' the shootee. Wall, as I was sayin' when right rudely interrupted, you fellers must have a cattle cache somewhars. Likely it'd either be up thisaway, or down thataway. Either way, yore friends would most likely ride up thisaway, even was they aimin' to circle round thataway—"

"Thisablither, thatablither," growled Squirty, driven to exasperation by the slow, droning voice. "When do we eat?"

"Make up yore own thisablathers," said Long Bob—"an' mebbe they'll be more to yore likin'."

They rode on in silence, save for an occasional direction from Bob. Presently he began to sing again in his deep, buzzing bass, this time soft and low.

"Rock of Ages, ope fer me;
Leave me hide—"

"My ——," said Squirty, reaching for his makings again.

Suddenly the singing stopped.

"Whoa," said the tall rider softly.

Up ahead, and to the right, barely discernible through the timber, was a point of firelight.

"Now I recommend that yuh make yorese'f real attentive to anythin' I may have to say," said Long Bob. "Allus rememberin' that bullets don't car who stops 'em!"

DIXIE KANE, Squirty Wallace's lithe and youthful partner, squatted beside the little fire, frying pan in hand. Across the fire sat the stranger in overalls, who had already that day caused large changes in the plans of three riding men and one steer. He was no longer, however, a man with an unkempt black beard. The well-kept razor that he was now stropping dry on his bootleg had done its work well. His face was now shaved to a polish, except for a small but dashing mustache, twirled into neat points at the ends.

He turned his peculiarly frank and open gaze upon Dixie Kane.

"Bet yuh wouldn't know me," said he.

"No," admitted Dixie. He shifted uneasily on his heels. "Speakin' o' knowin' folks, leave me be frank. There was a time today when I was in the way o' thinkin' that some o' your actions was jest a leetle bit peculiar—considerin' that this is Triangle R range. That's how come I rode up so rapid an' abrupt this afternoon. But I'm willin' to say now that the open way you acted since then has been plumb disarmin' o' suspicion. So I'm willin' to lay down my hand an' call all bets square, before we arrive at any downright misunderstandin', accidental. Me, I'm Dixie Kane."

"Oh yes," said the stranger. "Ridin' fo' the Triangle R? I heard yo' name—Old Man Rutherford mentioned that one o' his best hands was wukkin' over this way, name o' Dixie— Who's comin'?"

"Cows walkin'," said Dixie. "No fellers would be crashin' through the brush like that, so slow an' noisy."

They listened for a moment or two to the crackling of the brush, unexpectedly close at hand.

"What's cows doin' right on top o' the fiuh?" the stranger wanted to know.

"Mebbe some ol' reperbate actin' hostyle," suggested Dixie. "Whatcha limberin' up yer smoke-wagon for? They ain't goin' to rush the fire. Wait! It's only—"

TWO horsemen had suddenly appeared between the trees at the outer range of the firelight. In the lead Dixie instantly recognized the bowed legs of Squirty Wallace. At the instant that the riders appeared, the stranger across the fire had risen smoothly to his feet, swift anger in his face. Embittered oaths ripped from his mouth as if he were spitting out hot coals. He jerked out his .45, raised it, half lowered it uncertainly, raised it again—

Whatever was going on was a complete mystery to Dixie. However, a swift glance showed him that Squirty was smoking peaceably in his saddle, his cigaret near his mouth in his gun hand. Squirty had the appearance of a man who is about to get shot while playing the most dangerous of all parts—that of innocent bystander. Zowie! Dixie went into action, springing from where he crouched.

One of Dixie's slender, steel-strong hands gripped the gun barrel, twisting it upward as he catapulted into the other man. Being a single-action and not yet cocked, the gun did not fire. Dixie's other arm clamped around the stranger's neck from behind in a strangle hold. They went down, Dixie wrenching the .45 from the other's hand.

They rolled into the brush like brawling cats, the man in overalls fighting to tear free. Dixie's arm was torn from his opponent's throat by two strong hands; but his lean legs, still clad in their floppy chaps, twisted about the man's waist in a scissors hold. The young cowpuncher had never heard of scientific wrestling holds, but he had a first class instinct for rough-and-tumble. His next hold was a perfect half-nelson, forcing the man's chin down against his chest; and as the stranger struggled to his hands and knees, Dixie was on top.

There was a brief instant's respite as the man beneath gathered himself for a surge upward. Dixie promptly clouted the man behind the ear—not too hard—with the barrel of the .45. The stranger sagged, then shook his head and tried to get up. But the muzzle of the .45 pressed against his neck.

"Stay still," said Dixie Kane.

Meanwhile, the two mounted men—Squirty Wallace and the man from 'Rapahoe—had not sat idly by. The head of Long Bob's horse had drawn up opposite Squirty's left boot. As the stranger by the fire raised his gun, Squirty caught a glimpse of movement from the other's rifle, out of the corner of his eye.

Swiftly Squirty gaged the distance. Then he lifted himself in his saddle, agilely hooked the heel of his right boot on the horn, twisted and sprang upon Long Bob. The rifle slatted to the ground. Long Bob, taken completely by surprize, grunted and clutched for his .45 as Squirty Wallace bore him down. The startled horses jumped out from under. Then the tall man's head whacked against a tree and the fight was done.

No time was lost by Squirty Wallace in disarming his late captor. Long Bob, hard-headed and rugged, was out of the picture for only a matter of moments; but Squirty was standing over him, rifle in hand and both gun belts draped from his waist, as consciousness oozed back to Long Bob.

Squirty, ordinarily a man calm and slow to anger, was now well warmed up. As Long Bob raised himself creakily to a sitting position, Squirty Wallace stuck the rifle muzzle under his nose.

"Yuh see this?" he demanded harshly. Long Bob saw it.

"All right, all right," said Long Bob, feeling of his head as if to see if it were actually there, "I'll be good."

"Well, all right then," said Squirty, stepping back a little. "An' if actin' decent kills yuh, same is all right with me!"

"You all right, Squirty?"

Dixie's hail came from near the fire.

"Yeah. I've caught me a crazy man. How'd you come out?"

"I'm sittin' on mine. Best bring yourn over here in the light, where we can ride herd on 'em better."

Squirty Wallace piloted his man cautiously into the circle of firelight, where he made him sit down cross-legged. Dixie then moved his captive over next to Long Bob. The two punchers then placed themselves on either side of the fire, so that they formed a triangle with the two prisoners at one point.

"Now listen heah—" said the captive in overalls.

"Shut up," said Dixie Kane. "Now we got 'em, what we goin' to do with 'em?"

"Leave me make a suggestion," Long Bob began.

"You be still," ordered Squirty. "Yuh pretty near talked my arm off a'ready, an' that without sayin' nothin'. First place, Dixie, who's yer purty lookin' friend?"

"Do I have to—" the stranger broke in.

"Shut up. This here," explained Dixie, "is the feller we seen ridin' so strenuous a little while back. Me, I caught up with him. But he acted so reasonable, I didn't seem to have nothin' on him. So I jest rode along with him. You come up, an' he pulled his iron, so o' course I went to work an' took it away from him, afore he hurt some one. That's all I know about him. Mebbe we should take him apart, an' see how come he to tick."

"NOW, me—" said Squirty, silencing the prisoners with a wave of the rifle—"I rode over to Spider Gully, where we see this feller come from. There lies one of our critters, branded Triangle R plain. It's hog-tied, an' it's shot through the head—plumb ruined. While I'm spec'latin' on the wherefores o' that, this long, narrer-gage ol' renegade up an' pulls a rifle down on me. So up to now I been ridin' with him by his special request."

"Somethin's phony," said Dixie. "I don't make head nor tail of it."

"Me neither," Squirty admitted. "Can it be we're rejooced to leavin' them air out their alibis? I guess so." He casually pointed the rifle at the man in overalls. "What's your best lie on this subject, mister?"

"Why, my side of it's real simple," said the prisoner. "My name's Conway. I'm ridin' fo' the Triangle R." His soft Southern inflection made it "Triangle Ah."

"That's a hot one, all right," commented Squirty. "But it don't get by. Yuh best start over from the beginnin' an' try somethin' else. We happen to be ridin' fer the Triangle R, our own selves, an' we never heard tell of yuh!"

"Why sure not," agreed the man who called himself Conway. "I jest jined on. But I know about you fellers—Old Man Rutherford told me you was workin' over this way, somewheres. This feller must be Dixie Kane. An' I bet you're the guy they call Squirty—ain't that right?"

"I got a sneakin' suspicion he picked all that up from hearin' us talk jest now," said Squirty, "but leave that pass. How come that dead steer to be lyin' at the place you'd jest left?"

"That's easy. I finds this maverick on Triangle R range. So I throws it, hog-ties it an' brands it. Jest then I spot this big long siege o' trouble, heah—" he jerked his head to indicate Long Bob—"lyin' in the sage, with his rifle headed my way. I thought mebbe it wasn't ve'y healthy around theah fo' me. So I left, sudden. As I dragged out o' theah, I heard a shot back o' me. I s'pose he—" he indicated Long Bob again—"he threw down at me an' hit the critter. Now ain't that simple?"

Conway looked from one to the other of his captors. One of his mustaches had come untwirled, its frizzling brush giving his face a humorous appearance. Aside from this, he who called himself Conway had the lineaments of a fine looking man; his face, now freshly razored, was clean-cut, with a good jaw. And his gaze was peculiarly frank and direct.

Long Bob's deep bass boomed out suddenly:

"Then why was yuh fixin' that brand with a broken knife, 'stead of an arn? Explain them that."

"Why, I found that I'd lost my runnin' iron," said Conway readily. "So natcherly I was doin' the best I could with what I had."

"Wall, then," said Long Bob, "we'll jest take a look at that thar brand, an' see how it checks with yore story."

"Sho'," agreed Conway. "I'm as anxious to straighten this heah out as anybody is. We best ride ovah theah fust thing tomorruh."

"No need," said Bob, "I got th' brand right here in my back pocket."

Dixie Kane, watching Conway closely, was unable to perceive any trace of consternation in his face at this announcement.

"Good," Conway said instantly, "let's have it out an' show the boys."

Long Bob dragged the sodden, stiffening roll of hide from the pocket where he had placed it when first he collared Squirty. With steady hands he unrolled it, smoothing it out, hair side up, on the ground in the firelight.

"Thar she be," he said.

All leaned forward to examine the brand—even Squirty, who was the only one, except for Conway, who had seen it before.

Clotted black with dried blood, but perfectly plain even in the faltering yellow light, a fresh Triangle R brand stared up at them from the square of dun hide. Long Bob looked blank.

"And theah you ah," said Conway.

"Thar be more niggers in this wood-pile than meets the eye," opined Long Bob. "I smell lies!"

"Now this feller's story seems right believable," adjudged Squirty at last. "'Bout all we got against him is that we seen him ridin' fast away from a dead, fresh-branded steer. When he says this feller musta hit the steer, shootin' at him, that explains perfect how come the steer is so dead. As fer his ridin' away so fast, I wished two-three times today that I'd did the same myself. The brand he put on the steer is our brand, an' he says he's workin' fer our outfit. I think his yarn fits together pretty good."

"——," said Dixie, "we've jest made a mistake, that's plain."

"Only thing left to explain," Squirty concluded, "is how come yuh to throw down on me, as we come up?"

"It wasn't you I was makin' hostyle motions at," Conway explained. "It was this tall felluh. He'd already took one shot at me, right out of a cleah sky, so natcherly I was kind o' nervous."

"Dixie," said Squirty, "we've went to work an' did this feller wrong."

"I think so myself," said Dixie, his slender fingers rolling a fastidious cigaret. "You willin' to call quits, mister?"

"Absolutely no hard feelin's," Conway agreed heartily.

"Give him his gun."

"Now wait," boomed Long Bob, "don't fergit that I'm here representin' the law!"

"Who says so?"

"I say so!"

"Lessee yer star!" demanded Dixie.

"Stahs don't signify," Conway objected.

"That's right," agreed Squirty. "Pointin' his gun around promiscuous like he does, he could easy pot hisself a star, any day."

"Mebbe he's got a signed paper or somethin'."

"How's that goin' to help, when we don't know his right name?"

"Well, mister," Squirty summed up, "if you can prove you're a depity, go ahead. I aim to be fair. But no badge, nor papers, nor nothin' phony like that is goin' to go!"

"Go take a flyin' jump in the crick," was Long Bob's disgusted reply.

Dixie now handed Conway his gun. The latter stretched his angular frame, and took a lounging position on the opposite side of the fire from Long Bob, as if withdrawing himself from the neighborhood of a dangerous character.

"Now what about this other one?" Dixie asked Squirty.

"This is a crazy man," Squirty affirmed. "A feller ain't safe with the likes o' him runnin' loose on the range. I guess we got to take him back an' have him throwed into some public coop fer the nutty."

"Where's that?"

"I dunno. We'll jest herd him back to the home ranch—that leaves us out. But first an' foremost, I move you we eat. Who's got water?"

Conway got swiftly to his feet; he fairly radiated willingness to help.

"I know wheah they's a seep, scarcely big as a man's hat, right neah by. Only about three minutes' ride away. Gimme yo' canteens, an' I'll fill 'em afo' yuh can tu'n round, hardly."

He handily detached the canteen from Dixie's saddle, and drew up the latigo of his own loose-saddled horse.

"I thought yuh said—" began Dixie.

"I jest happened to remembuh this place," explained Conway. "It all comes back to me now."

"Hadn't one o' yuh better go with him—jest to learn whar it's at?" suggested Long Bob.

"Oh shut up," said Squirty. "Talk, talk, talk. 'Nough to wear a feller plumb out."

Conway jogged off into the night. Neither Squirty Wallace nor Dixie Kane ever saw him again.

TIME passed. They caught the coupled horses of Squirty and Long Bob, and picketed them out. They finished frying the meat that Dixie had started when trouble broke loose, and cooked more. Finally they ate the meat, with yesterday's bread and scant dribbles of bitter black coffee.

"I wish Conway would get back," said Dixie Kane nervously. "My belly sure is prayin' fer rain."

"Dixie," said Squirty solemnly, "I'm beginnin' to think somethin's wrong."

It was the first time either had admitted to the other his growing suspicion that they had made a mistake. "I know —— well something's wrong," said Dixie, "an' I'm goin' to ride after him an' see."

"Save your leather," advised Squirty. "You'll never find him now. He's got anyways a half hour start."

"You think he's run out on us, definite?"

"Odds are now a hundred to one, an' mountin' fast. Dixie, we've been stang."

Dixie seemed to chew over this bitter situation.

"Then," he demanded, "how come he to brand the dun steer with our brand?"

"Look," said Long Bob quietly, tossing over the curling square of hide that bore the brand. "I see through it now. Jest run yore thumb along the edge o' that brand! An' notice that kind o' tail stickin' out from the point o' the Triangle, like a miss-start? That brand was made over an old Triangle R brand!"

"But it is a Triangle R."

"Soon's he throwed that dun steer he started to monkey with that brand. That's how come that miss-start. Then he seen me, an' fast as he could he scraped over the old brand—raisin' the hide, so's it'd look as if he was jest puttin' it on. He didn't know how I got thar—which was simple enough—but he knew I'd seen him monkeyin' with a branded Triangle R cow, with knife an' acid, 'stead o' the iron. So he fixed it so's the evidence would show nothin' worse than puttin' a Triangle R brand free o' charge on a Triangle R cow!"

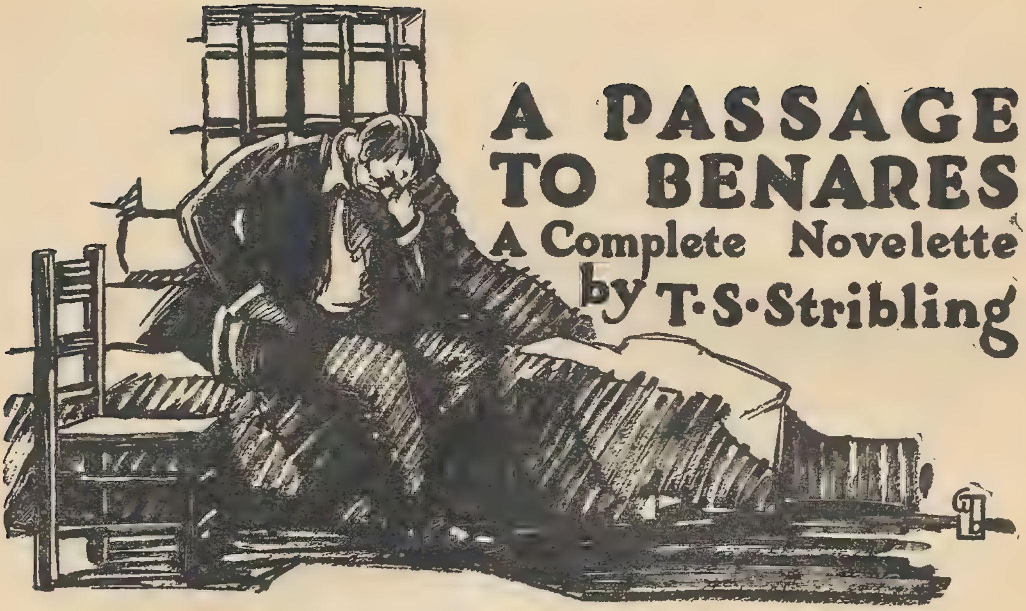
Dixie and Squirty looked at each other.

Long Bob broke into a deep chuckle.

"Don't you boys worry no more about lettin' him go. We couldn't 'a' proved anythin' so very good, anyway. An' the main idear is that one cattle thief has been chased plumb clean away. Yore boss'll be real glad t' hear how us three druv the leadin' nuisance around here right out o' th' country. Sorry I took you out o' your way, Mister Scooplegs, afore I got th' right lay o' the land. But o' course, we won't mention that, when we get back—"

"Dixie," said Squirty Wallace, "I b'lieve I'm beginnin' to like this ol' renegade. I dunno but what I am."

Then they gave him back his gun.



A PASSAGE TO BENARES

A Complete Novelette

by T·S·Stribling

Author of "Fombombo," "Cricket," etc.

IN PORT of Spain, Trinidad, at half-past five in the morning Mr. Henry Poggioli, the American psychologist, stirred uneasily, became conscious of a splitting headache, opened his eyes in bewilderment, and then slowly reconstructed his surroundings. He recognized the dome of the Hindu temple seen dimly above him; the jute rug on which he lay; the blur of the image of Krishna sitting cross-legged on the altar. The American had a dim impression that the figure had not sat thus on the altar all night long, but had—a dream no doubt; he had a faint memory of lurid nightmares. The psychologist allowed the thought to lose itself as he got up slowly from the sleeping rug which the cicerone had spread for him the preceding evening.

In the circular temple, everything was still in deep shadow, but the gray light of dawn filled the arched entrance. The white man moved carefully to the door so as not to jar his aching head. A little distance from him he saw another sleeper, a coolie beggar stretched out on a rug, and he thought he saw still another farther away. As he passed out of the entrance the cool freshness of the tropical morning caressed his face like the cool fingers of a woman. Kiskadee birds were calling from palms and saman trees, and there was a wide sound of dripping dew. Not far from the temple a coolie woman stood on a see-saw with a great stone attached to the other end of the plank, and by stepping to and fro she swung the stone up and down and pounded some rice in a mortar.

Poggioli stood looking at her a moment, then felt in his pocket for the key to his friend Lowe's garden-gate. He found it and then moved off up Tragarette Road to where the squalid East Indian village gave way to the high garden walls and ornamental shrubbery of the English suburb of Port of Spain. He walked on more briskly as the fresh air eased his head, and presently he stopped and unlocked a gate in one of the bordering walls. He began to smile as he let himself in; his good humor increased as he walked across a green lawn to a stone cottage which had a lower window still standing open. This was his own room. He reached up to the sill, drew himself up inside, which gave his head one last pang. He shook this away, however, and began undressing for his morning shower.

Mr. Poggioli was rather pleased with his exploit, although he had not forwarded the experiment which had induced him to sleep in the temple. It had come about in this way. On the foregoing evening, the American and his host in Port of Spain, a Mr. Lowe, a bank clerk, had watched a Hindu wedding procession enter the same temple in which Poggioli had just spent the night.

"*A Passage to Benares,*" *copyright, 1925, by T. S. Stribling.*

They had watched the dark-skinned, white-robed musicians smiting their drums and skirling their pipes with bouffant cheeks. Behind them marched a procession of coolies. The bride was a little cream-colored girl who wore a breastplate of linked gold coins over her childish bosom, while anklets and bracelets almost covered her arms and legs. The groom, a tall dark coolie, was the only man in the procession who wore European clothes, and he, oddly enough, was attired in a full evening-dress suit. At the incongruous sight, Poggioli had burst out laughing, but Lowe touched his arm and said in an undertone—

"Don't take offense, old man, but if you didn't laugh, it might help me somewhat."

Poggioli had straightened his face.

"Certainly, but how's that?"

"The groom, Boodman Lal, owns one of the best curio shops in town and carries an account at my bank. That fifth man in the procession, the skeleton wearing the yellow *kapra*, is old Hira Dass. He is worth something near a million in pounds sterling."

The psychologist became sober enough, out of his American respect for money.

"Hira Dass," went on Lowe, "built this temple, and rest-house. He gives rice and tea to any traveler who comes in for the night. It's an Indian custom to help mendicant pilgrims to the different shrines. A rich Indian will build a temple and a rest-house just as your American millionaires erect libraries."

The American nodded again, watching now the old man with the length of yellow silk wrapped around him. And just at this point Poggioli received the very queer impression which had led to his night's adventure.

When the wedding procession entered the temple, the harsh music had stopped abruptly. Then, as the line of robed coolies disappeared into the dark interior, a strange impression arose in the psychologist that the procession had been swallowed up and had ceased to exist. The bizarre red-and-gold building stood in the glare of sunshine, a solid reality, while its devotees had been dissipated into nothingness.

So peculiar, so startling was the impression, that Poggioli blinked and wondered how he ever came by it. The temple had somehow suggested the Hindu theory of Nirvana. Was it possible that the Hindu architect had caught some association of ideas between the doctrine of obliteration and these curves and planes and colors glowing before him? Had he done it by contrast or simile? The fact that Poggioli was a psychologist made the problem all the more intriguing to him—the psychologic influence of architecture. There must be some rationale behind it. An idea how he might pursue this problem came into his head. He turned to his friend and exclaimed—

"Lowe, how about staying overnight in old Hira Dass' temple?"

"Doing what?" with a stare of amazement.

"Staying a night in the temple. I had an impression just then, a—"

"Why my dear fellow!" ejaculated Lowe, "no white man ever stayed all night in a coolie temple. It simply isn't done!"

The American argued his case a moment—

"You and I had a wonderful night aboard the *Trevemore* when we became acquainted."

"That was a matter of necessity," said the bank clerk. "There were no first-class cabin accommodations left on the *Trevemore* so we had to make the voyage on deck."

Here the psychologist had given up his bid for companionship. Late that night he had slipped out of Lowe's cottage, walked back to the grotesque temple, was given a cup of tea, a plate of rice and a sleeping rug. The only further impression the investigator obtained was a series of fantastic and highly colored dreams, of which he could not recall a detail. Then he had waked with a miserable headache and had come home.

MR. POGGIOLI finished his dressing and a few minutes later the breakfast bell rang. He went to the dining-room to find the bank clerk unfolding the damp pages of the Port of Spain *Inquirer*. This was a typical English sheet using small solidly set colums without flaming headlines. Poggioli glanced at it and wondered mildly if nothing worth featuring ever happened in Trinidad.

Ram Jon, Lowe's Hindu servant, slipped in and out of the breakfast room with peeled oranges, tea, toast and a custard fruit, flanked by a half lemon to squeeze over it.

"Pound sterling advanced a point," droned Lowe from his paper.

"It'll reach par," said the American smiling faintly and wondering what Lowe would say if he knew of his escapade.

"Our new Governor-general will arrive in Trinidad on the twelfth."

"Surely that deserved a headline," said the psychologist.

"Don't try to debauch me with your American yellow journalism," smiled the bank clerk.

"Go your own way if you prefer doing research work every morning for breakfast."

The bank clerk laughed again at this, continued his perusal, then said—

"Hello, another coolie kills his wife. Tell me, Poggioli, as a psychologist, why do coolies kill their wives?"

"For various reasons, I fancy, or perhaps this one didn't kill her at all. Surely now and then some other person—"

"Positively no! It's always the husband, and instead of having various reasons, they have none at all. They say their heads are hot, and so to cool their own, they cut off their wives'!"

The psychologist was amused in a dull sort of way.

"Lowe, you Englishmen are a nation with fixed ideas. You genuinely believe that every coolie woman who is murdered is killed by her husband without any motive whatever."

"Sure, that's right," nodded Lowe, looking up from his paper.

"That simply shows me you English have no actual sympathy with your subordinate races. And that may be the reason your empire is great; your aloofness, your unsympathy; by becoming automatic you become absolutely dependable; the idea that every coolie woman is murdered by her husband without a motive!"

"That's correct," repeated Lowe with English imperturbability.

The conversation was interrupted by a ring at the garden-gate bell. A few moments later the two men saw through the window Ram Jon slithering across the grass with his greasy black hair shining in the morning sunlight. Lowe watched his servant with distaste.

"Something about these Hindus I don't like," he observed.

Poggioli smiled.

"Another evidence of your racial unsympathy."

"Now look here," defended Lowe, "nobody could like them. The way they walk makes me think of snakes gliding about on their tails."

Poggioli sat smiling and watched Ram Jon unlock the wall door, open it a few inches, parley a moment and receive a letter. Then he came back with his limber, gliding gait.

Lowe received the note through the open window, broke the envelope and fished out two notes instead of one. The clerk looked at the inclosures and began to read with a growing bewilderment in his face.

"What is it?" asked Poggioli at last.

"This is from old Hira Dass to Jeffries, the vice president of our bank. He says his nephew Boodman Lal has been arrested and he wants Jeffries to help get him out."

"What's he arrested for?"

"Er—for murdering his wife," said Lowe with a long face.

Poggioli stared.

"Wasn't he the man we saw in the procession yesterday?"

"—— it, yes!" cried Lowe in sudden disturbance, "and he's a sensible fellow, too, one of our best patrons—" He sat staring at the American over the letter, and then suddenly recalling a point, drove it home English fashion—

"That proves my contention, Poggioli—a groom of only six or eight hours' standing, killing his wife—they simply commit uxorcide without any reason at all, the —— irrational rotters!"

"What's the other letter?" probed the American leaning across the table.

"It's from Jeffries. He says he wants me to take this case and get the best talent in Trinidad to clear Mr. Hira Dass' nephew. Also, that I am to go to Mr. Hira Dass' house at once and consult with him." The clerk replaced the letters in the envelope. "Say, you've had some experience in this sort of thing. Won't you come with me?"

"Glad to."

The two men arose promptly from the table, got their hats and went out into Tragarette Road once more. As they stood in the increasing heat waiting for a car, it occurred to Poggioli that the details of the murder ought to be in the morning's paper. He took the *Enquirer* from his friend and began a search through its closely printed columns. Presently he found a paragraph without any heading at all:

Boodman Lal, nephew of Mr. Hira Dass, was arrested early this morning at his home in Peru, the East Indian suburb, for the alleged murder of his wife whom he married yesterday at the Hindu temple in Peru. The body was found at six o'clock this morning in the temple. The attendant gave the alarm. Mrs. Boodman Lal's head was severed completely from her body and she lay in front of the Buddhist altar in her bridal dress. All of her jewelry was gone. Five coolie beggars who were asleep in the temple when the body was discovered were arrested. They claimed to know nothing of the crime, but a search of their persons revealed that each beggar had a piece of the young bride's jewelry and a coin from her necklace.

Mr. Boodman Lal and his wife were seen to enter the temple at about eleven o'clock last night for the Krishnian rite of purification. Mr. Boodman, who is a prominent curio dealer in this city, declines to say anything further than he thought his wife had gone back to her mother's home for the night after her prayers in the temple. The young bride, formerly a Miss Maila Ran, was thirteen years old. Mr. Boodman is the nephew of Mr. Hira Dass, one of the wealthiest men in Trinidad."

The paragraph following this contained a notice of a tea given at Queen's Park Hotel by Lady Henley-Hoads, and the names of her guests.

THE psychologist spent a painful moment pondering the kind of editor who would run a millionaire murder mystery without any caption whatever in between a legal notice and a society note. Then he turned his attention to the gruesome and mysterious details the paragraph contained.

"Lowe, what do you make out of those beggars, each with a coin and a piece of jewelry?"

"Simple enough. The rotters laid in wait in the temple till the husband went out and left his wife, then they murdered her and divided the spoil."

"But that child had enough bangles to give a dozen to each man."

"Ye-es, that's a fact," admitted Lowe.

"And why should they continue sleeping in the temple?"

"Why shouldn't they? They knew they would be suspected, and they couldn't get off the island without capture, so they thought they might as well lie back down and go to sleep."

Here the street-car approached and Mr. Poggioli nodded apparently in agreement, "Yes, I am satisfied that is how it occurred."

"You mean the beggars killed her?"

"No, I fancy the actual murderer took the girl's jewelry and went about the temple thrusting a bangle and a coin in the pockets of each of the sleeping beggars to lay a false scent."

"Aw come now!" cried the bank clerk, "that's laying it on a bit too thick, Poggioli!"

"My dear fellow, that's the only possible explanation for the coins in the beggars' pockets."

By this time the men were on the tram-car and were clattering off down Tragarette Road. As they dashed along toward the Hindu village, Poggioli remembered suddenly that he had walked this same distance the preceding night and had slept in this same temple. A certain sharp impulse caused the American to run a hand swiftly into his own pockets. In one side he felt the keys of his trunk and of Lowe's cottage; in the other, he touched several coins and a round hard ring. With a little thrill he drew these to the edge of his pocket and took a covert glance at them. One showed the curve of a gold bangle; the other the face of an old English gold coin which evidently had been soldered to something.

With a little sinking sensation, Poggioli eased them back into his pocket and stared ahead at the coolie village which they were approaching. He moistened his lips and thought what he would better do. The only notion that came into his head was to pack his trunk and take passage on the first steamer out of Trinidad, no matter to what port it was bound.

In his flurry of uneasiness the psychologist was tempted to drop the gold pieces then and there, but as the street-car rattled into Peru he reflected that no other person in Trinidad knew that he had these things, except indeed the person who slipped them into his pocket, but that person was not likely to mention the matter. Then, too, it was such an odd occurrence, so piquing to his analytic instinct, that he decided he would go on with the inquiry.

Two minutes later Lowe rang down the motorman and the two companions got off in the Hindu settlement. By this time the street was full of coolies, greasy men and women, gliding about with bundles on their heads or coiled down in the sunshine in pairs where they took turn in examining each other's head for vermin. Lowe glanced about, oriented himself, then started walking briskly past the temple, when Poggioli stopped him and asked him where he was going.

"To report to old Hira Dass according to my instructions from Jeffries," said the Englishman.

"Suppose we stop in the temple a moment. We ought not to go to the old fellow without at least a working knowledge of the scene of the murder."

The clerk slowed up uncertainly, but at that moment they glanced through the temple door and saw five coolies sitting inside. A policeman at the entrance was evidently guarding these men as prisoners.

Lowe approached the guard, made his mission known, and a little later he and his guest were admitted into the temple.

The coolie prisoners were as repulsive as are all of their kind. Four were as thin as cadavers, the fifth one, greasily fat. All five wore cheese-cloth around their thin bodies which left them as exposed as if they had worn nothing at all. One of the emaciated men held his mouth open all the time with an expression of suffering caused by a chronic lack of food. The five squatted on their rugs and looked at the white men with their bead-like eyes. The fat one said in a low tone to his companions—

"The sahib—"

THIS whispered ejaculation disquieted Mr. Poggioli somewhat, and he reflected again that it would have been discretion to withdraw from the murder of little Maila Ran as quietly as possible. Still he could explain his presence in the temple simply enough. And besides the veiled face of the mystery seduced him. He stood studying the five beggars, the greasy one, the lean ones, the one with the suffering face.

"Boys," he said to the group, for all coolies are boys, "did any of you hear any noises in this temple last night?"

"Much sleep, sahib, no noise. Police-y-man punch us 'wake this morning make sit here still."

"What's your name?" asked the American of the loquacious fat mendicant.

"Chuder Chand, sahib."

"When did you go to sleep last night?"

"When I ate rice and tea, sahib."

"Do you remember seeing Boodman Lal and his wife enter this building last night?"

Here their evidence became divided. The fat man remembered; two of the cadavers remembered only the wife, one only Boodman Lal, and one nothing at all.

Poggioli confined himself to the fat man.

"Did you see them go out?"

All five shook their heads.

"You were all asleep then?"

A general nodding.

"Did you have any impressions during your sleep, any disturbance, any half rousing, any noises?"

The horror-struck man said in a ghastly tone—

"I dream bad dream, sahib, when police-y-man punch me awake this morning I think my dream is come to me."

"And me, sahib."

"Me, sahib."

"Me."

"Did you all have bad dreams?"

A general nodding.

"What did you dream, Chuder Chand?" inquired the psychologist with a certain growth of interest.

"Dream me a big fat pig, but still I starved, sahib."

"And you?" at a lean man.

"That I be mashed under a great bowl of rice, sahib, but hungry."

"And you," asked Poggioli of the horror-struck coolie.

The coolie wet his dry lips and whispered in his ghastly tones:

"Sahib, I dreamed I was Siva, and I held the world in my hands and bit it and it tasted bitter, like the rind of a mammy apple. And I said to Vishnu, 'Let me be a dog in the streets, rather than taste the bitterness of this world,' and then the policeman punched me, sahib, and asked if I had murdered Maila Ran."

The psychologist stood staring at the sunken temples and withered chaps of the beggar, amazed at the enormous vision of being a god which had visited the old mendicant's head. No doubt this grandiloquent dream was a sort of compensation for the starved and wretched existence the beggar led.

Here the bank clerk intervened to say that they would better go on around to old Hira Dass' house according to instructions.

Poggioli turned and followed his friend out of the temple.

"Lowe, I think we can now entirely discard the theory that the beggars murdered the girl."

"On what grounds?" asked the clerk in

surprize. "They told you nothing but their dreams."

"That is the reason. All five had wild fantastic dreams. That suggests they were given some sort of opiate in their rice or tea last night. It is very improbable that five ignorant coolies would have wit enough to concoct such a piece of evidence as that."

"That's a fact," admitted the Englishman a trifle surprized, "but I don't believe a Trinidad court would admit such evidence."

"We are not looking for legal evidence; we are after some indication of the real criminal."

BY THIS time the two men were walking down a hot malodorous alley which emptied into the square a little east of the temple. Lowe jerked a bell-pull in a high adobe wall, and Poggioli was surprized that this could be the home of a millionaire Hindu. Presently the shutter opened and Mr. Hira Dass himself stood in the opening. The old Hindu was still draped in yellow silk which revealed his emaciated form almost as completely as if he had been naked. But his face was alert with hooked nose and brilliant black eyes, and his wrinkles did not so much suggest great age as they did shrewdness and acumen.

The old coolie immediately led his callers into an open court surrounded by marble columns with a fountain in its center and white doves fluttering up to the frieze or floating back down again. The Hindu began talking immediately of the murder and his anxiety to clear his unhappy nephew. The old man's English was very good, no doubt owing to the business association of his latter years.

"A most mysterious murder," he deplored, shaking his head, "and the life of my poor nephew will depend upon your exertions, gentlemen. What do you think of those beggars that were found in the temple with the bangles and coins?"

Mr. Hira Dass seated his guests on a white marble bench, and now walked nervously in front of them, like some fantastic old scarecrow draped in yellow silk.

"I am afraid my judgment of the beggars will disappoint you, Mr. Hira Dass," answered Poggioli, "My theory is they are innocent of the crime."

"Why do you say that?" queried Hira Dass, looking sharply at the American.

The psychologist explained his deductions from their dreams.

"You are not English, sir," exclaimed the old man. "No Englishman would have thought of that."

"No, I'm half Italian and half American."

The old Indian nodded.

"Your Latin blood has subtlety, Mr. Poggioli, but you base your proof on the mechanical cause of the dreams, not upon the dreams themselves."

The psychologist looked at the old man's cunning face and gnome-like figure and smiled.

"I could hardly use the dreams themselves, although they were fantastic enough."

"Oh, you did inquire into the actual dreams?"

"Yes, by way of professional interest."

"What is your profession; aren't you a detective?"

"No, I'm a psychologist."

Old Hira Dass paused in his ratchetty walking up and down the marble pavement to stare at the American and then burst into the most wrinkled cachinnation Poggioli had ever seen.

"A psychologist, and inquired into a suspected criminal's dreams out of mere curiosity!" the old gnome cackled again, then became serious. He held up a thin finger at the American. "I must not laugh, your oversoul, your *atman*, is at least groping after knowledge as the blindworm gropes. But enough of that, Mr. Poggioli. Our problem is to find the criminal who committed this crime and restore my nephew Boodman Lal to liberty. You can imagine what a blow this is to me. I arranged this marriage for my nephew."

The American looked at the old man with new ground for deduction.

"You did—arranged a marriage for a nephew who is in the thirties?"

"Yes, I wanted him to avoid the pitfalls into which I fell," replied old Hira Dass seriously. "He was unmarried, and had already begun to add dollars to dollars. I did the same thing, Mr. Poggioli, and now look at me, an empty old man in a foreign land. What good is this marble court where men of my own kind can not come and sit with me, and when I have no grandchildren to feed the doves? No, I have piled up dollars and pounds. I have eaten the world, Mr. Poggioli and found it bitter; now here I am, an outcast—"

There was a passion in this outburst which moved the American and at the same time the old Hindu's phraseology was sharply reminiscent of the dreams told him by the beggars in the temple. The psychologist noted the point hurriedly and curiously in the flow of the conversation and at the same moment some other part of his brain was inquiring tritely—

"Then why don't you go back to India, Mr. Hira Dass?"

"With this worn-out body," the old Hindu made a contemptuous gesture toward himself, "and with this face, wrinkled with pence! Why, Mr. Poggioli, my mind is half English. If I should return to Benares, I would walk about thinking what the temples cost, what was the value of the stones set in the eyes of Krishna's image. That is why we Hindus lose our caste if we travel abroad and settle in a foreign land, because we do indeed lose caste. We become neither Hindus nor English. Our minds are divided, so if I would ever be one with my own people again, Mr. Poggioli, I must leave this western mind and body here in Trinidad."

Old Hira Dass' speech brought to the American that fleeting credulity in transmigration of the soul which an ardent believer always inspires. The old Hindu made the theory of palingenesis appear almost matter of fact. A man died here and reappeared as a babe in India. There was nothing so unbelievable in that. A man's basic energy which has loved, hated, aspired and grieved here must go somewhere, while matter itself was a mere dance of atoms. Which was the most permanent, Hira Dass' passion or his marble court, both were mere forms of force. The psychologist drew himself out of his reverie.

"That is very interesting, or I should say moving, Hira Dass. You have strange griefs. But we were discussing your nephew, Boodman Lal. I think I have a theory which may liberate him."

"And what is that?"

"As I explained to you, I believe the beggars in the temple were given a sleeping potion. I suspect the temple attendant doped the rice and later murdered your nephew's wife."

The millionaire became thoughtful.

"That is old Gooka. I employ him. He is a miserably poor man, Mr. Poggioli, so I can not believe he committed this murder."

"Pardon me, but I don't follow your reasoning. If he is poor he would have a strong motive for the robbery."

"That's true, but a very poor man would never have dropped the ten pieces of gold into the pockets of the beggars to lay a false scent. The man who did this deed must have been a well-to-do person accustomed to using money to forward his purposes. Therefore, in searching for the criminal I would look for a moneyed man."

"But Mr. Hira Dass," protested the American, "that swings suspicion back to your nephew."

"My nephew!" cried the old man growing excited again. "What motive would my nephew have to slay his bride of a few hours!"

"But what motive," retorted Poggioli with academic curtness, "would a well-to-do man have to murder a child? And what chance would he have to place an opiate in the rice?"

The old Hindu lifted a finger and came closer.

"I'll tell you my suspicions," he said in a lowered voice, "and you can work out the details."

"Yes, what are they?" asked Poggioli becoming attentive again.

"I went down to the temple this morning to have the body of my poor murdered niece brought here to my villa for burial. I talked to the five beggars and they told me that there was a sixth sleeper in the temple last night." The old coolie shook his finger, lifted his eyebrows and assumed a very gnomish appearance indeed.

A certain trickle of dismay went through the American. He tried to keep from moistening his lips and perhaps did, but all he could think to do was to lift his eyebrows and say—

"Was there indeed?"

"Yes—and a white man!"

Lowe, the bank clerk, who had been sitting silent through all this, interrupted.

"Surely not, Mr. Hira Dass, not a white man!"

"All five of the coolies and my man Gooka told me it was true," reiterated the old man, "and I have always found Gooka a truthful man. And besides, such a man would fill the role of assailant exactly. He would be well-to-do, accustomed to using money to forward his purposes—"

THE psychologist made a sort of mental lunge to refute this rapid array of evidence old Hira Dass was piling up against him.

"But, Mr. Hira Dass, decapitation is not an American mode of murder!"

"American!"

"I—I was speaking generically," stammered the psychologist, "I mean a white man's method of murder."

"That is indicative in itself," returned the Hindu promptly. "I meant to call your attention to that point. It shows the white man was a highly educated man, who had studied the mental habits of other peoples than his own, so he was enabled to give the crime an extraordinary resemblance to a Hindu crime. I would suggest, gentlemen, that you begin your search for an intellectual white man."

"What motive could such a man have?" cried the American.

"Robbery, possibly, or if he were a very intellectual man indeed he might have murdered the poor child by way of experiment. I read not long ago in an American paper of two youths who committed such a crime."

"A murder for experiment!" cried Lowe aghast.

"Yes, to record the psychological reaction."

Poggioli got suddenly to his feet.

"I can't agree with such a theory as that, Mr. Hira Dass," he said in a shaken tone.

"No, its too far-fetched," declared the clerk at once.

"However it is worth while investigating," persisted the Hindu.

"Yes, yes," agreed the American, evidently about to depart, "but I shall begin my investigations with the man Gooka."

"As you will," agreed Hira Dass, "and in your investigations, gentlemen, hire any assistance you need, draw on me for any amount. I want my nephew exonerated, and above all things I want the real criminal apprehended and brought to the gallows."

Lowe nodded.

"We'll do our best, sir," he answered in his thorough-going English manner.

The old man followed his guests to the gate and bowed them out into the malodorous alleyway again.

As the two friends set off through the hot sunshine once more, the bank clerk laughed:

"A white man in that temple; that sounds like pure fiction to me to shield Boodman Lal. You know these coolies hang together like thieves." He walked on a little way pondering, then added, "Jolly good thing we didn't decide to sleep in the temple last night, isn't it, Poggioli?"

A sickish feeling went over the American. For a moment he was tempted to tell his host frankly what he had done and ask his advice in the matter, but finally he said—

"In my opinion the actual criminal is Boodman Lal."

Lowe glanced around sidewise at his guest and nodded faintly.

"Same here, I've thought it ever since I first saw the account in the *Enquirer*. Somehow these coolies will chop their wives to pieces for no reason at all apparently."

"I know a very good reason in this instance," retorted the American warmly, taking out his uneasiness in this manner. "It's these —— child marriages! When a man marries some child he doesn't care a tuppence for—what do you know about Boodman Lal anyway?"

"All there is to know. He was born here, and has always been a figure here in Port of Spain because of his rich uncle."

"Lived here all his life?"

"Except when he was in Oxford for six years."

"Oh, he's an Oxford man!"

"Yes."

"There you are, that's the trouble."

"What do you mean?"

"No doubt he fell in love with some English girl. But when his wealthy uncle Hira Dass chose a Hindu child for his wife, Boodman could not refuse the marriage. No man is going to quarrel with a million-pound legacy, but he chose this ghastly method of getting rid of the child."

"I venture you're right," declared the bank clerk, "I felt sure Boodman Lal had killed the girl."

"Likely as not he was engaged to some English girl and was waiting for his uncle's death to make him wealthy."

"Quite possible, in fact probable."

Here a cab came angling across the square toward the two men as they stood in front of the grotesque temple. The negro driver waved his whip interrogatively. The clerk beckoned him in. The cab drew up at the curb. Lowe climbed in, but Poggioli remained on the pavement.

"Aren't you coming?"

"You know, Lowe," said Poggioli seriously, "I don't feel that I can conscientiously continue this investigation trying to clear a person whom I have every reason to believe guilty."

The bank clerk was disturbed.

"But man, don't leave me like this! At least come on to the police headquarters and explain your theory about the temple-keeper, Gooka and the rice. That seems to hang together pretty well. It is possible Boodman Lal didn't do this thing after all. We owe it to him to do all we can."

As Poggioli still hung back on the curb, Lowe asked—

"What do you want to do?"

"Well, I—er—thought I would go back to the cottage and pack my things."

The bank clerk was amazed.

"Pack your things—your boat doesn't sail till Friday!"

"Yes, I know, but there is a daily service to Curacao, it struck me to go—"

"Aw come!" cried Lowe in hospitable astonishment, "you can't run off like that, just when I've stirred up an interesting murder mystery for you to unravel. You ought to appreciate my efforts as a host more than that."

"Well, I—do," hesitated Poggioli seriously. At that moment his excess of caution took one of those odd instantaneous shifts that come so unaccountably to men, and he thought to himself, "Well, —— it, this is an interesting situation. It's a shame to leave it, and nothing will happen to me."

So he swung into the cab with decision and ordered briskly—

"All right, to the police station, Sambo!"

"Sounds more like it," declared the clerk, as the cab horses set out at a brisk trot through the sunshine.

MR. LOWE, the bank clerk, was not without a certain flair for making the most of a house guest, and when he reached the police station he introduced his companion to the chief of police as "Mr. Poggioli, a professor in an American university and a research student in criminal psychology."

The chief of police, a Mr. Vickers, was a short thick man with a tropic-browned face and eyes habitually squinted against the sun. He seemed not greatly impressed with the titles Lowe gave his friend but merely remarked that if Mr. Poggioli was hunting crimes, Trinidad was a good place to find them.

The bank clerk proceeded with a certain importance in his manner.

"I have asked his counsel in the Boodman Lal murder case. He has developed a theory, Mr. Vickers, as to who is the actual murderer of Mrs. Boodman Lal."

"So have I," replied Vickers with a dry smile.

"Of course you think Boodman Lal did it," said Lowe in a more commonplace manner.

Vickers did not answer this but continued looking up at the two taller men in a listening attitude which caused Lowe to go on.

"Now in this matter, Mr. Vickers, I want to be perfectly frank with you. I'll admit we are in this case in the employ of Mr. Hira Dass, and are making an effort to clear Boodman Lal. We felt confident you would use the well known skill of the police department of Port of Spain to work out a theory designed to clear Boodman Lal, just as readily as you would to convict him."

"Our department usually devotes its time to conviction and not to clearing criminals—"

"Yes, I know that, but if our theory will point out the actual murderer—"

"What is your theory?" inquired Vickers without enthusiasm.

The bank clerk began explaining the dreams of the five beggars and the probability that they had been given sleeping potions.

The short man smiled faintly.

"So Mr. Poggioli's theory is based on the dreams of these men?"

Poggioli had a pedagog's brevity of temper when his theories were questioned.

"It would be a remarkable coincidence, Mr. Vickers, if five men had lurid dreams simultaneously without some physical cause. It suggests strongly that their tea or rice was doped."

As Vickers continued looking at Poggioli, the American continued with less acerbity—

"I should say that Gooka, the temple-keeper, either doped the rice himself or knows who did it."

"Possibly he does."

"My idea is that you send a man for the rice-pot and tea-pot, have their contents analyzed, find out what soporific was used, then have your men search the sales records of the drug stores in the city to see who has lately bought such a drug."

Mr. Vickers grunted a noncommittal "uh-huh" and then began in the livelier tone of a man who meets a stranger socially—

"How do you like Trinidad, Mr. Poggioli?"

"Remarkably luxuriant country—oranges and grapefruit growing wild."

"You've just arrived?"

"Yes."

"In what university do you teach?"

"Ohio State."

Mr. Vickers' eyes took on a humorous twinkle:

"A chair of criminal psychology in an ordinary State university; is that the result of your American prohibition laws, Professor?"

Poggioli smiled at the thrust.

"Mr. Lowe misstated my work a little. I am not a professor; I am simply a docent. And I have not specialized on criminal psychology; I quiz on general psychology."

"You are not teaching now?"

"No; this is my sabbatical year."

Mr. Vickers glanced up and down the American.

"You look young to have taught in a university six years."

There was something not altogether agreeable in this observation, but the officer rectified it a moment later by saying:

"But you Americans start young—land of specialists. Now you, Mr. Poggioli, I suppose you are wrapped up heart and soul in your psychology?"

"I am," agreed the American positively.

"Do anything in the world to advance yourself in the science?"

"I rather think so," asserted Poggioli with his enthusiasm mounting in his voice.

"Especially keen on original research work—"

Lowe, interrupted, laughing.

"That's what he is, chief. Do you know what he asked me to do yesterday afternoon?"

"No, what?"

The American turned abruptly on his friend.

"Now, Lowe, don't let's burden Mr. Vickers with household anecdotes."

"But I am really curious," declared the police chief. "Just what did Professor Poggioli ask you to do yesterday afternoon, Mr. Lowe?"

The bank clerk looked from one to the other, hardly knowing whether to go on or not. Mr. Vickers was smiling; Poggioli was very serious, as he prohibited anecdotes about himself. The bank clerk thought—

"This is real modesty." He said aloud—

"It was just a little psychological experiment he wanted to do."

"Did he do it?" smiled the chief.

"Oh no, I wouldn't hear to it."

"As unconventional as that!" cried Mr. Vickers, lifting sandy brows.

"It really was nothing," said Lowe, looking at his guest's rigid face and then at the police captain.

Suddenly Mr. Vickers dropped his quizzical attitude.

"I think I could guess your anecdote if I tried, Lowe. About a half hour ago I received a telephone message from my man stationed at the Hindu temple to keep a lookout for you and Mr. Poggioli."

The American felt a tautening of his muscles at this frontal attack. He had suspected something of the sort from the policeman's manner. The bank clerk stared at the officer in amazement—

"What was your bobby telephoning about us for?"

"Because one of the coolies under arrest told him that Mr. Poggioli slept in the temple last night."

"My word, that's not true!" cried the bank clerk. "That is exactly what he did not do. He suggested it to me but I said no. You remember, Poggioli—"

Mr. Lowe turned for corroboration, but the look on his friend's face amazed him.

"You didn't do it, did you, Poggioli?" he gasped.

"You see he did," said Vickers dryly.

"But Poggioli—in ——'s name—"

The American braced himself for an attempt to explain. He lifted his hand with a certain pedagogic mannerism—

"Gentlemen, I—I had a perfectly valid, an important reason for sleeping in the temple last night."

"I told you," nodded Vickers.

"In coolie town, in a coolie temple!" ejaculated Lowe.

* * *

"GENTLEMEN, I — can only ask your—your sympathetic attention to what I am about to say."

"Go on," said Vickers.

"You remember, Lowe, you and I were down there watching a wedding procession.

Well, just as the music stopped and the line of coolies entered the building, suddenly it seemed to me as if—as if—they had—" Poggioli swallowed at nothing and added the odd word, "vanished."

Vickers looked at him.

"Naturally, they had gone into the building."

"I don't mean that. I'm afraid you won't understand what I do mean—that the whole procession had ceased to exist, melted into nothingness—"

Even Mr. Vickers blinked. Then he drew out a memorandum book and stolidly made a note.

"Is that all?"

"No, then I began speculating on what had given me such a strange impression. You see that is really the idea on which the Hindus base their notion of heaven, oblivion, nothingness—"

"Yes, I've heard that before."

"Well, our medieval Gothic architecture was a conception of our western heaven; and I thought perhaps the Indian architecture had somehow caught the motif of the Indian religion; you know, suggested Nirvana. That was what amazed and intrigued me. That was why I wanted to sleep in the place. I wanted to see if I could further my shred of impression. Does this make any sense to you, Mr. Vickers?"

"I daresay it will, sir, to the criminal judge," opined the police chief cheerfully.

The psychologist felt a sinking of the heart.

Mr. Vickers proceeded in the same matter of fact tone:

"But no matter why you went in, what you did afterward is what counts. Here in Trinidad nobody is allowed to go around chopping off heads to see how it feels."

Poggioli looked at the officer with a ghastly sensation in his midriff.

"You don't think I did such a horrible thing as an experiment?"

Mr. Vickers drew out the makings of a cigaret.

"You Americans, especially you intellectual Americans do some pretty stiff things, Mr. Poggioli. I was reading about two young intellectuals—"

"Good Lord!" quivered the psychologist with this particular reference beginning to grate on his nerves.

"These fellows I read about also tried to turn an honest penny by their murder—I don't suppose you happened to notice yesterday that the little girl, Maila Ran, was almost covered over with gold bangles and coins?"

"Of course I noticed it!" cried the psychologist growing white, "but I had nothing whatever to do with the child. Your insinuations are brutal and repulsive. I did sleep in the temple—"

"By the way," interrupted Vickers suddenly, "you say you slept on a rug just as the other coolies did?"

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't wake up either?"

"No."

"Then did the murderer of the child happen to put a coin and a bangle in your pockets, just as he did the other sleepers in the temple?"

"That's exactly what he did!" cried Poggioli, with the first ray of hope breaking upon him. "When I found them in my pocket on the tram this morning I came pretty near throwing them away, but fortunately I didn't. Here they are."

And gladly enough now he drew the trinkets out and showed them to the chief of police.

Mr. Vickers looked at the gold pieces, then at the psychologist.

"You don't happen to have any more do you?"

The American said no, but it was with a certain thrill of anxiety that he began turning out his other pockets. If the mysterious criminal had placed more than two gold pieces in his pockets, he would be in a very difficult position. However the remainder of his belongings were quite legitimate.

"Well, that's something," admitted Vickers slowly. "Of course you might have expected just such a questioning as this and provided yourself with these two pieces of gold, but I doubt it. Somehow I don't believe you are bright enough man to think of such a thing." He paused pondering and finally said, "I suppose you have no objection to my sending a man to search your baggage in Mr. Lowe's cottage?"

"Instead of objecting, I invite it, I request it."

Mr. Vickers nodded agreeably.

"Who can I telegraph to in America to learn something about your standing as a university man."

"Dean Ingram, Ohio State, Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

Vickers made this note, then turned to Lowe.

"I suppose you've known Mr. Poggioli for a long time, Mr. Lowe?"

"Why n-no, I haven't," admitted the clerk.

"Where did you meet him?"

"Sailing from Barbuda to Antigua. On the *Trevemore.*"

"Did he seem to have respectable American friends aboard?"

Lowe hesitated and flushed faintly.

"I—can hardly say."

"Why?"

"If I tell you Mr. Poggioli's mode of travel, I am afraid you would hold it to his disadvantage."

"How did he travel?" queried the officer in surprize.

"The fact is, he traveled as a deck passenger."

"You mean he had no cabin, shipped along on deck with the negroes!"

"I did it myself!" cried Lowe growing ruddy. "We couldn't get a cabin—they were all occupied."

The American reflected rapidly, and realized that Vickers could easily find out the real state of things from the ship's agents up the islands.

"Chief," said the psychologist with a tongue that felt thick, "I boarded the *Trevemore* at Saint Kitts. There were cabins available. I chose a deck passage deliberately. I wanted to study the natives."

"Then you are broke, just as I thought," ejaculated Mr. Vickers, "and I'll bet pounds to pence we'll find the jewelry around your place somewhere."

The chief hailed a passing cab, called a plain-clothes man, put the three in the vehicle and started them briskly back up Prince Edward's street, toward Tragarette Road and thence to Lowe's cottage beyond the Indian village and its ill-starred temple.

* * *

THE three men and the negro driver trotted back up Tragarette, each lost in his own thoughts. The plain-clothes man rode on the front seat with the cabman, but occasionally he glanced back to look at his prisoner. Lowe evidently was reflecting how this contretemps would affect his social and business standing in the city. The negro also kept peering back under the hood of his cab, and finally he ejaculated:

"Killum jess to see 'um die. I declah, dese 'Mericans—" and he shook his kinky head.

A hot resentment rose up in the psychologist at this continued recurrence of that detestable crime. He realized with deep resentment that the crimes of particular Americans were held tentatively against all American citizens, while their great national charities and humanities were forgotten with the breath that told them. In the midst of these angry thoughts, the cab drew up before the clerk's garden gate.

All got out. Lowe let them in with a key and then the three walked in a kind of grave haste across the lawn. The door was opened by Ram Jon, who took their hats, and then followed them into the room Lowe had set apart for his guest.

This room, like all Trinidad chambers, was furnished in the sparsest and coolest manner possible; a table, three chairs, a bed with sheets and Poggioli's trunk. It was so open to inspection nothing could have been concealed in it. The plain-clothes man opened the table drawer.

"Would you mind opening your trunk, Mr. Poggioli?"

The American got out his keys, knelt and undid the hasp of his wardobe trunk, then swung the two halves apart. One side held containers, the other suits. Poggioli opened the drawers casually; collar and handkerchief box at the top, hat box, shirt box. As he did this came a faint clinking sound. The detective stepped forward and lifted out the shirts. Beneath them lay a mass of coins and bangles flung into the tray helter-skelter.

The American stared with an open mouth, unable to say a word.

The plain-clothes man snapped with a certain indignant admiration in his voice—

"Your nerve almost got you by!"

The thing seemed unreal to the American. He had the same uncanny feeling that he had experienced when the procession entered the temple. Materiality seemed to have slipped a cog. A wild thought came to him that somehow the Hindus had dematerialized the gold and caused it to reappear in his trunk. Then there came a terrifying fancy that he had committed the crime in his sleep. This last clung to his mind. After all, he had murdered the little girl bride, Maila Ran!

The plain-clothes man spoke to Lowe—

"Have your man bring me a sack to take this stuff back to headquarters."

Ram Jon slithered from the room and presently returned with a sack. The inspector took his handkerchief, lifted the pieces out with it, one by one and placed them in the sack.

"Lowe," said Poggioli pitifully, "you don't believe I did this, do you?"

The bank clerk wiped his face with his handkerchief.

"In your own trunk, Poggioli—"

"If I did it I was sleep-walking!" cried the unhappy man. "My God, to think it is possible—but right here in my own trunk—" he stood staring at the bag, at the shirt-box.

The plain-clothes man said dryly:

"We might as well start back, I suppose. This is all."

Lowe suddenly cast in his lot with his guest.

"I'll go back with you, Poggioli. I'll see you through this pinch. Somehow I can't, I won't believe you did it!"

"Thanks! Thanks!"

The bank clerk masked his emotion under a certain grim facetiousness—

"You know, Poggioli, you set out to clear Boodman Lal—it looks as if you've done it."

"No he didn't," denied the plain-clothes man. "Boodman Lal was out of jail at least an hour before you fellows drove up a while ago."

"Out—had you turned him out?"

"Yes."

"How was that?"

"Because he didn't go to the temple at all last night with his wife. He went down to Queen's park Hotel and played billiards till one o'clock. He called up some friends and proved that easily enough."

Lowe stared at his friend aghast.

"My word, Poggioli, that leaves nobody but—you."

The psychologist lost all semblance of resistance.

"I don't know anything about it. If I did it I was asleep. That's all I can say. The coolies—" He had a dim notion of accusing them again, but he recalled that he had proved to himself clearly and logically that they were innocent. "I don't know anything about it," he repeated helplessly.

Half an hour later the three men were at the police headquarters once more, and the plain-clothes man and the turnkey, a humble, gray sort of man took the American back to a cell. The turnkey unlocked one in a long row of cells and swung it open for Poggioli.

The bank clerk gave him what encouragement he could.

"Don't be too down-hearted. I'll do everything I can. Somehow I believe you are innocent. I'll hire your lawyers, cable your friends—"

Poggioli was repeating a stunned "thanks! thanks!" as the cell door shut between them. The bolt clashed home and was locked. And the men went tramping back down the iron corridor. Poggioli was alone.

THERE was a chair and a bunk in the cell. The psychologist looked at these with an irrational feeling that he would not stay in the prison long enough to warrant his sitting down. Presently he did sit down on the bunk.

He sat perfectly still and tried to assemble his thoughts against the mountain of adverse evidence which suddenly had been piled against him. His sleep in the temple, the murder, the coins in his shirt box—after all he must have committed the crime in his sleep.

As he sat with his head in his hands pondering this theory, it grew more and more incredible. To commit the murder in his sleep, to put the coins in the pockets of the beggars in a clever effort to divert suspicion, to bring the gold to Lowe's cottage and then to go back and lie down on the mat, all while he was asleep—that was impossible. He could not believe any human being could perform so fantastic, so complicated a feat.

On the other hand no other criminal would place the whole booty in Poggioli's trunk and so lose it. That too was irrational. He was forced back to his dream theory.

When he accepted this hypothesis, he wondered just what he had dreamed. If he had really murdered the girl in a nightmare, then the murder was stamped somewhere in his subconscious divided from his day memories by the nebulous associations of sleep. He wondered if he could reproduce them.

To recall a lost dream is perhaps one of the nicest tasks that ever a human brain was driven to. Poggioli, being a psychologist, had had a certain amount of experience with such attempts. Now he lay down on his bunk and began the effort in a mechanical way.

He recalled as vividly as possible his covert exit from Lowe's cottage, his walk down Tragarette Road between perfumed gardens, the lights of Peru, and finally his entrance into the temple. He imaged again the temple attendant, Gooka, looking curiously at him, but giving him tea and rice and pointing out his rug. Poggioli remembered that he lay down on the rug on his back with his hands under his head exactly as he was now lying on his cell bunk. For a while he had stared at the illuminated image of Krishma, then at the dark spring of the dome over his head.

And as he lay there, gazing thus, his thoughts had begun to waver, to lose beat with his senses, to make misinterpretations. He had thought that the Krishna moved slightly, then settled back and became a statue again—here some tenuous connection in his thoughts snapped, and he lost his whole picture in the hard bars of his cell again.

Poggioli lay relaxed a while then began once more. He reached the point where the Krishna moved, seemed about to speak, and then—there he was back in his cell.

It was nerve-racking, tantalizing, this fishing for the gossamers of a dream which continually broke; this pursuing the grotesqueries of a nightmare and trying to connect it with his solid every day life of thought and action. What had he dreamed? What had he done in his dream?

Minutes dragged out as Poggioli pursued the vanished visions of his head. Yes, it had seemed to him that the image of the Buddha moved, that it had even risen from its attitude of meditation and suddenly, with a little thrill, Poggioli remembered that the dome of the Hindu temple was opened and this left him staring upward into a vast abyss. It seemed to the psychologist that he stared upward, and the Krishna stared upward, both gazing into an unending space, and presently he realized that he and the great upward staring Krishna were one; that they had always been one; and that their oneness filled all space with enormous, with infinite power. But this oneness which was Poggioli was alone in an endless featureless space. No other thing existed, because nothing had ever been created; there was only a creator. All the creatures and matter which ever had been or ever would be were wrapped up in him, Poggioli, or Buddha. And then Poggioli saw that space and time had ceased to be, for space and time are the offspring of division. And at last Krishna or Poggioli was losing all entity or being in this tranced immobility.

And Poggioli began struggling desperately against nothingness. He writhed at his deadened muscles, he willed in torture to retain some vestige of being, and at last after what seemed millenniums of effort he formed the thought:

"I would rather lose my oneness with Krisnha and become the vilest and poorest of creatures—to mate, fight, love, lust, kill and be killed than to be lost in this terrible trance of the universal!"

And when he had formed this tortured thought Poggioli remembered that he had awaked and it was five o'clock in the morning. He had arisen with a throbbing headache and had gone home.

That was his dream.

THE American arose from his bunk filled with the deepest satisfaction from his accomplishment. Then he recalled with surprize that all five of the coolies had much the same dream; grandiloquence and power accompanied by great unhappiness.

"That was an odd thing," thought the psychologist, "six men dreaming the same dream in different terms. There must have been some physical cause for such a phenomenon."

Then he remembered that he had heard the same story from another source. Old Hira Dass, in his marble court had expressed the same sentiment, complaining of the emptiness of his riches, and power. However—and this was crucial—Hira Dass' grief was not a mere passing nightmare, it was his settled condition.

With this a queer idea popped into Poggioli's mind. Could not these six dreams have been a transference of an idea? While he and the coolies lay sleeping with passive minds, suppose old Hira Dass had entered the temple with his great unhappiness in his mind, and suppose he had committed some terrible deed which wrought his emotions to a monsoon of passion. Would not his horrid thought have registered themselves in different forms on the minds of the sleeping men!

Here Poggioli's ideas danced about like the molecules of a crystal in solution; each one rushing of its own accord to take its appointed place in a complicated crystalline design. And so, a complete understanding of the murder of little Maila Ran rushed in upon him.

Poggioli leaped to his feet and halloed his triumph.

"Here, Vickers! Lowe! Turnkey! I have it! I've solved it! Turn me out! I know who killed the girl!"

After he had shouted for several minutes Poggioli saw the form of a man coming up the dark aisle with a lamp. He was surprized at the lamp but passed over it.

"Turnkey!" he cried, "I know who murdered the child—old Hira Dass! Now listen—" he was about to relate his dream, but realized that would avail nothing in an English court, so he leaped to the physical end of the crime; matter with which the English juggle so expertly. His thoughts danced into shape.

"Listen turnkey, go tell Vickers to take that gold and develop all the finger-prints on it—he'll find Hira Dass' prints! Also tell him to follow out that opiate clue I gave him; he'll find Hira Dass' servant bought the opiate. Also Hira Dass sent a man to put the gold in my trunk. See if you can't find brass or steel filings in my room where the scoundrel sat and filed a new key. Also give Ram Jon the third degree, he knows who brought the gold—"

The one with the lamp made a gesture.

"They've done all that, sir, long ago."

"They did!"

"Certainly, sir, and old Hira Dass confessed everything, though why a rich old man like him should have murdered a pretty child, is more than I can see. These Hindus are unaccountable, sir, even the millionaires."

Poggioli passed over so simple a query.

"But why did the old —— pick on me for a scape-goat?" he cried, puzzled.

"Oh he explained that to the police, sir. He said he picked on a white man so the police would make a thorough investigation and be sure to catch him. In fact he said, sir, that he had willed that you should come and sleep in the temple that night."

Poggioli stared with a little prickling sensation at this touch of the occult world.

"What I can't see sir," went on the man with the lamp, "was why the old coolie wanted to be caught and hanged—why didn't he commit suicide?"

"Because then his soul would have returned in the form of some beast. He wanted to be slain. He expects to be reborn instantly in Benares with little Maila Ran. He hopes to be a great man with a wife and children."

"Nutty idea!" cried the fellow.

But the psychologist sat staring at the lamp with a queer feeling that possibly such a fantastic idea might be true after all. For what goes with this passionate uneasy force in man when he dies? May not the dead struggle to reanimate themselves as he had done in his dream. Perhaps the numberless dead still will to live and be divided; and perhaps living things are a result of the struggles of the dead, and not the dead of the living—

His thoughts suddenly shifted back to the present.

"Turnkey," he snapped with academic sharpness, "why didn't you come and tell me of old Hira Dass' confession the moment it occurred. What did you mean, keeping me locked up here when you knew I was an innocent man!"

"Because I couldn't," said the form with the lamp sorrowfully, "Old Hira Dass didn't confess until a month or two after you were hanged, sir."

And the lamp went out.

The LOST VENUS

by George E. Holt

Author of "Moorish Gold," "Shields of Islam," etc.

"SOME men *are* that way—they must eternally inquire into new and strange things, into the motives of Allah in having ordained that matters be thus and so. Wherefore—"

"But heavens above, man!" I interrupted him. "Was there *no* way of stopping him? It's lunacy, suicide, for an outsider to go into that country. The Beni Musa, of all tribes!"

"Of course. Of course. I told him. Have you never tried to convince a lover, or a poet, or a scientist? Hypnotized by an idea, he was. Looked blank, and started all over again about the Phœnicians, and the Lost Venus of Knidos, and the survival of Christian traditions and symbols in a tribe uncontaminated by contact with civilization—what?"

Reynolds Ballard swung his elderly gray eyes from the whisky-and-soda in his hand to seek understanding in my face.

It was really none of my affair. Except that, after all, the one American residing in ancient Marraksh, farthest outpost of the modern world in South Morocco, is necessarily bound by ties of race to prevent a fellow countryman from going farther, to a sudden and unpleasant death. Beyond Marraksh were the Atlas Mountains and what lies hidden in their valleys is almost entirely a matter of guesswork. That which is not, is unlovely.

Ballard, the Englishman, was my friend and His Britannic Majesty's Consular Agent at Mogador, which is the port of entrance for southern Morocco. Upon my occasional journeys to Tangier, in connection with the business house I represent in Marraksh, I invariably spend an hour or two with Ballard, to listen to his gossip.

He is older than he would have been had he not been lost for twenty years or more in the little Moroccan port, and much more deliberate and unexcitable and inclined to philosophizing than he would have been if the translation of the songs of Sidi Hammo had not had to substitute for contact with the outside world. A placid, gray, introspective fellow.

But now, upon my way back to Marraksh, instead of the usual news of rebellions and deposed *bashas*, indiscreet *kaids*, or the political marriages of the great chiefs of the south, Ballard had shocked my ears by a quiet, drawling, half-told tale of a lunatic countryman of mine, a moon-struck archeologist who, during my absence, had arrived at Mogador, told impossible plans to Ballard, and departed for Marraksh and the Atlas Mountains in search of a white goddess.

This goddess he believed to be the famous

Lost Venus of Knidos, by Praxiteles, and also the origin of certain legends of the Beni Musa tribe. The Beni Musa! Sons of Moses, that means—and there was no more fanatical, deadly tribe in all Morocco. Even other fighting tribes gave it a wide berth. For a foreigner to go among the Sons of Musa was like Daniel going into the lions' den, but without the mantle of the Lord's protection enwrapping him.

"I think, if it had not been for the girl, I might have persuaded him." Ballard's drawling voice cut into my thoughts.

"The girl—what girl? Let's have the story, man."

"The girl with the cross tattooed on her shoulder. He caught sight of her on the street one day. Stopped her to look at the tattooing. I happened along, fortunately, and explained to those who were about to mob him that he was—hm!—touched.

"Well, it's true, as I was fool enough to tell him, that this girl—she's only a kid—was stolen from the Beni Musa. *I* asked her once about the tattooing—ethnologically it's interesting. She didn't know anything about it except that all the girl children were so marked. The symbol on her shoulder wasn't the only one."

"But Allison—the archeologist—what did he do?"

"Oh! Your Mr. Allison lost what little sense he had. It fitted in so nicely with his theories of the survival of Christian legends and practises among the isolated Atlas tribes—since the eighth century. And the worship of a white goddess, no one less than a Praxiteles Venus which once, according to—er—somebody, stood overlooking the blue Phrygian sea. Wherefore he went away."

"As I am about to do," I said. "*Allah kerim!* You might as well have given him a gun and encouraged him to shoot himself. No, I don't want another drink. And some dark night, no doubt, there will be left at my gates what remains of a former American—as a delicate warning against future ethnological studies. In that case—" I was more than half in earnest; Ballard should have roped the idiot and sent him to the Consul General in Tangier—"in that case I hope you will realize your culpability."

But Ballard shook his head in negation and sipped his drink.

"A poet, a lover, or a scientist—they are in the hands of Allah," he said.

RUSHTI, my ancient groom, came swiftly to meet me. His flapping slippers left a sulfurous wake of dust; his high-pitched eunuch voice chattered phrases like a parrot in a eucalyptus tree, and his pendant wisp of beard fluttered like dried moss when the wind's fingers pull at it.

"*Sidi—Sidi!* Praise be to Allah! Come at once, *Sidi!* I found him—oh, it is most terrible—I found him, *Allah kerim!* Make haste! Beneath a tree. He talks incessantly, *Sidi,* or he talks not at all. Beneath the great tree, a *rouimi,* an American, *Sidi.*"

Thus he babbled as he ran beside my horse, holding to a stirrup strap, until we reached the gateway of my garden. There, sitting upon a mounting-block, I encircled his scattered thoughts as stampeded cattle are rounded up, so that after a little time of quiet he drew a deep breath and slowly, very slowly, told me some of the things he desired to tell.

"It was only yesterday, *Sidi,* that these matters occurred. Yesterday at sunrise. After the sunrise prayer I rode forth to the eastward, to the house of Hadj Larbi, concerning a matter of a bag of *kesk'soo* which was needed. Having attended to that matter, I returned by the path that leads past the shrine of Sidi Idrees. Coming to this place, therefore, by the north gate."

My house and garden lay upon the outskirts of the walled city.

"Beneath the big tree near the gate I observed something. At first it looked like a bag of grain. But as I drew near, it moved. I saw it was a man in a brown *djellaba.* Also, *Sidi,* I saw that he was not one of us. He was of white face and yellow beard.

"I got off my horse, *Sidi,* now being assured that he was ill or hurt, and I went closer. Then I saw that he was one I knew. Yes, *Sidi,* he had stopped here, asking for you. While you were in the north. He desired certain foodstuffs and other things which we gave him, of course. It was difficult to understand him. He spoke of strange things—without meaning. We could not determine whither he was going. So he went.

"When I saw him again, *Sidi,* he was lying beneath the big tree at the north gate. When I was near to him he made as if to rise. But he fell back again groaning and mumbling and his eyes were not the eyes of a man, *Sidi.* So I summoned Cassim. We carried him to the house and cared for him as best we could.

"His head is empty, *Sidi,* and he talks of most strange matters. And, *Sidi,* when we bathed him, we found that his hands and wrists were cut and torn. As if dogs had chewed them. As if dogs had chewed them, *Sidi!* Much he looks at them, although we have put cloths upon them. Also he speaks of strange things to some one who is not present—and of a curse."

"Things—such as?"

"A white god who has punished him, and a slave girl who is a *rouimi,* a Christian, and a wooden cross which has hurt his hands and wrists. And—oh, *Sidi*—there is no sense in them, of any sort. His mind is vacant."

So this was the end of Allison's search for the lost Venus: To return mutilated in mind and body by the fanatics of the Beni Musa. Yet, it was strange indeed, I thought, that he still lived. Then I remembered that among the natives the man insane is an object of reverence. "A vacant mind is a temple wherein Allah dwells," is the saying. But I had never heard of this being thought true of a Christian.

I went into the house to see Allison.

I HAD learned to make much allowance for Rushti's excitability—more, for the excitability of all natives when foreigners came among them and did strange things. But behind the story my groom had told me, lay the darkly significant background of what I had learned from Ballard at Mogador.

That the man in my house was Allison, the archeologist, I had no doubt. Americans were as rare in Marraksh in those days as Moroccans in Omaha. Nor did I have any hope that such a man of one idea, as Ballard had pictured him to me, would not have gone far enough into the mountains to get into serious trouble. How he had returned at all was the problem filling my mind when I entered the room where they had put him.

A figure was lying in bed, with only his head visible. The head, which apparently had been staring at the blank white wall behind it, turned slowly as I entered. It had a shock of brass-colored hair, a short beard which matched the hair in color, and gray-green eyes which seemed abnormally large and deep. At first, too, I thought them penetrating. But quickly I realized that they only stared, with much of the same fixity and lack of meaning which a baby's eyes have.

He spoke no word of greeting, nor did I. I sat down upon the bed beside him and waited for his voice. The big eyes searched my face carefully, then became fixed upon my hands. I felt a nervous motion of his arms beneath the blanket. At last his eyes again sought mine, his lips moved silently for a space, as though forming untried words; then, raspingly—

"My hands—they hurt me."

It was several days before he showed the desire or ability to talk lucidly, days during which he lay staring with open eyes as at some invisible cinematograph picture, but without the slightest emotion altering the lines of his face or the depth of his eyes.

When I was in the room, he would let his gaze rest upon me or follow me, which somehow was embarrassing, because of the lack of intelligence behind the eyes, or he would turn his face to the wall and remain so until I had gone away. The servants who attended him said that he ate and drank and was washed as a "good baby," but without interest. Then, one morning as I entered the room, he smiled at me.

It would be useless, even were I able, to reproduce the story as I heard it from Allison, in long-spaced words, disconnected phrases and now and then a bubble of sentences which would break off with a snap or subside into meaningless mumbles. That he enjoyed to have me sit beside him and that he desired to talk to me, was evident; but for some days I was able to learn but little. Most of that I learned from the daily entries in a portion of a diary he had kept until—as long as he was able.

I did not suspect the existence of this diary until by looks and vague noises he directed my attention to the dressing-table in his room. There I found the little book where my servants had put it with the rest of his belongings. Although much of it I did not understand—at least fully—it was easy to get from it his story up to a certain point. Many pages had been filled with notes and references made before his coming to Morocco, so that the object of his search became more clear to me than Ballard had made it in Mogador.

Briefly stated, Allison's travels and

studies in the east had brought him in touch with the unsolved problem of the lost Venus of Knidos. In his diary he had summed up in a single paragraph all that was actually known of this work of art.

Carved by the chisel of Praxiteles, it had once stood upon a rocky coast overlooking the Phrygian Sea, and was called by the ancients Melitta, or Mylitta. Then it had disappeared from history, as if the earth had swallowed it. But Allison had formed a theory, because of the recent discovery off the Algerian coast of an entire shipload of marvelous statuary, sunken no doubt while being brought thither by the Carthaginians, when Carthage was mistress of the sea.

His theory was that the Venus itself had been seized by Phœnician galleys and carried to Algeria or Morocco. This belief, formed, I imagine, more or less lightly at first, had soon assumed importance in his eyes because of his discovery of two other matters which seemed to bear upon it.

He had found that one of the old Phœnicians towns in Morocco—a city of which the very site could not now be located with any accuracy—had been called Melitta, the very name of the Knidian Venus. And the other thing which he had discovered was the report by some ancient traveler that a certain tribe or tribes in the southern Atlas Mountains were believed to worship a white goddess.

These things had been enough for Allison's archeologic sense. He had come from Algiers to Mogador, where he had prepared for his expedition into the southern Atlas. And at Mogador he had found, as Ballard had told me, what he thought to be another link in the chain.

There he had learned that the fanatical and isolated Beni Musa tribe—the Sons of Moses—tattooed all of its girl children with the sign of the cross and other Christian symbols. Which argued, of course, the retention by this tribe of certain Christian legends surviving for more than a thousand years since Morocco had been Christian.

The entries in the little diary, for several weeks after Allison left Mogador, were brief. They chronicled only his arrival in Marraksh, his finding me absent, his departure from my house with half a dozen native servants he had picked up, and the flight of these servants one by one, and day by day, as they drew nearer and nearer to the mountains, until at last but one remained.

Upon the heels of these entries was a hiatus of several days. Then to my amazement followed the brief record that he had been most cordially received by the Beni Musas, that the women of the tribe all were tattooed and that inquiries concerning the white goddess had been replied to in such a manner as to make him certain that he was on the track of the missing Venus.

Followed a few more entries—mostly descriptive of an astounding consideration for himself on the part of the tribe—and an unfinished sentence at the foot of the page, beginning—

I have seen the white goddess——

Then saw-edges of paper in a twisted binding, and a skip of fifty numbers in pagination clearly indicated that some hand had torn away the rest of the record.

And then came a night when, as I sat smoking beside Allison's bed, a change took place in him. He awoke from an uneasy sleep to stare at me and then about the room. In his eyes I saw a new light—the light of intelligent memory. He raised his bandaged hands one at a time, looked at each, and let them fall back, a queer little smile twisting his lips. Then he looked at me again for a little while without speaking. But at last he drew a deep breath, smiled again and said—

"It *was* the Venus."

Then the gates of speech were opened and he told me that which he desired to tell. At first he told me what I had already learned from his diary and from Ballard at Mogador, but I did not interrupt him, and quickly he came to the Beni Musas.

"They received me," he said, "most cordially—almost as if my coming had been desired and expected. They gave me a clean little thatch-roofed house and servants to wait upon me. The boy whom I had brought with me I could not find again. I think he ran away. They did not restrict me in any way. I went about the village quite freely and they even let me examine the tattoo marks upon the little girls.

"It was most interesting. There is no doubt that these marks have been handed down from mother to daughter for a thousand years or more. I made copies, but I shall have to make them again—from memory. I think that marks are added from time to time until the girl is married.

Because there was a girl, a young woman, who was ill when I arrived. Pneumonia. Of course they didn't know what to do for her.

"But I have studied medicine, so they permitted me to attend her. They have amazing powers of recovery. An American woman would have been in bed for two weeks—would have died. This girl was up and about again in three days. But assuredly she would have died had it not been for the medicine I gave her. *She* had most peculiar markings upon her breast— Why do they call themselves Sons of Moses?"

I was forced to reply that I did not know, except that a great many of the tribes are Sons—*Beni*—of persons or things. And Moses, of course, was a prophet recognized by all Mohammedans.

"But," objected Allison, "the Beni Musa is not a Mohammedan tribe. It is Christain, if beliefs and legends and practises constitute Christianity, and yet— But I must tell you other things first.

"Upon the third day I had opportunity to make inquiries concerning a white goddess. I had been discreet about such inquiry; people's gods are not to be approached lightly. Much to my surprize no hesitancy was shown in speaking of this goddess. Quite frankly I was told that she was a very beautiful goddess who stood in a little cavern but a short distance from the village—it turned out to be about a mile.

"She was spoken of as M'lita. That—her name—you may be sure gave me a thrill. But whence she had come I could gather little. Always the question was replied to with an arm waved northward, and the time as having been 'the time of Musa.' Also, it was said, she had come accompanied by a great army led by this same Musa, or Moses.

"Therein you can trace legends of the exodus and of the lost tribe and of the Carthaginian invasion and a few other things."

"You knew, of course," I said, "that an Arab historian, writing in the fourth century A. D., chronicled the existence near Tangier, of a pillar bearing the inscription, 'We have fled before the face of Joshua, the robber, son of Nun?' "

Allison nodded assent.

"Quite possible," he said. "Why not?

"And then I asked permission to see the goddess M'lita. This permission was promptly granted. Perhaps that should have made me suspicious. But it didn't. And so a day was set, two days later, when I was to be taken to look upon the goddess.

"Now, on that day a matter occurred which gave me uneasiness. In the morning came the girl who had had pneumonia, bringing me a bouquet of white narcissus, which I judged she had gathered from the hills. As she gave them to me—it was where I was sitting outside my house—we were alone for a moment. Putting the flowers into my hands the girl, who seemed much excited, whispered to me:

" 'Don't go! Don't go! Go the other way!' she glanced toward the west. 'Go back whence you came—quickly—to-night!'

"And then a man of the tribe approached and she went away. Of course I thought about her words and wondered, but I could see no reason for taking her advice. Besides—I guess you know how it is—I had found the goddess, and I had to see her."

I nodded with understanding: so it is when one finds the trail of game.

"And so that afternoon," continued Allison, "I went with four of the Sons of Musa, one of whom was manifestly a priest, to see the goddess. Half an hour's walk brought us to the foot of the hill. We climbed it and circled about, and suddenly came out upon a little plateau on the eastern side. Twenty steps farther and we came to a little cavern, obviously cut by man, and there the Sons of Musa threw themselves upon their faces, grunting.

"My inclination was to follow suit, out of sheer admiration for the beautiful thing which stood within the cavern. An ivory figure standing out humanly against the black curtains of the cavern's shadow. Man! Man! You can't imagine the effect of the thing in such a place.

"In a great museum it would have stood preeminent, a living, breathing thing in marble, but here among the mountains in that little cavern—alone—it was like the soul of ancient Greece reincarnated in the body of all beauty. It seemed to speak.

"I heard the priest mumbling lengthily, and heard the others grunt what seemed to be assent. How long I stood there I don't know. Somehow the thing struck me amazingly. Century after century rose and trampled upon me with heavy foot. I saw this goddess standing upon the rock beside the Phrygian Sea. I saw her seized and carried in a great galley to the splendors of ancient Carthage.

"I saw the wars—and the marble goddess carried westward along the Mediterranean to find safety in far-off Mauretania. I saw a city built in her honor and named for her, as a fitting home for such a creature. I saw the Roman hosts invading the land, and the goddess, carried by loving hands, taken into the impenetrable fastnesses of the Atlas Mountains—carried with what infinite labor and infinite precaution—southward among the towering peaks, hundreds upon hundreds of miles.

"And I saw the making of this cave for her, by the hands of the Sons of Musa which had been motionless for a thousand years. I tell you, man, it crushed me. I felt as I think I would feel were we unexpectedly to hear the sound of Gabriel's trumpet, and to see the scrolls of history unroll.

"Then, dazed, I was led away by the living Sons of Musa, and we returned to the village. In silence. The next thing—"

Allison smiled a faint twisted smile.

"Let us cut that part short," he said. "I found that I had been expected. I found that the welcome extended me, that the permission granted me to set eyes upon the white goddess, had been because I was the fulfilment of a legend—of a belief—of a promise.

"Time had not dealt kindly with their Christian legends. The harsh life of the mountains, the lessons of the rugged peaks and rocky cañons, had entered into the souls of these Sons of Musa, and half-forgotten, half-remembered things had twisted, distorted, the things they had once believed. And so they built, in accordance with their understanding of matters, a cross of hewn timbers, and upon either side of it a smaller cross.

"Me they hung by cords to the central one, and to the others two of the Sons of Musa who sought the honor of such a death. There were ceremonies—I do not need to tell you about them. They lasted until sunset. And then a sudden thunder storm arose like a genii among the mountains, and swept down upon us.

"After darkness had come—yes, long after darkness—I heard through the mist of my unconsciousness, the sobbings of a woman; I felt her hands upon my body, fingers searching to see if my heart still beat. And then I felt my bonds grow loose as a knife severed them. For a little while I lay where I had fallen.

"The girl whimpered and muttered about the curse of the white goddess that now rested upon her and upon me, and urged me with clinging, shaking hands, to be gone. A little round loaf of bread she thrust upon me. I assured her that no curse could harm her, or myself. But I do not know—I do not know. If they find out—I do not know—

"However, I sought, as best I might, the safety of the mountains. How I got back here I scarcely know. For days I lived on roots and berries and herbs I found along the watercourses. And for other days—I know not how I lived. And thus eventually I came here. But I have seen the goddess! I have seen that which has been lost for a millenium and a half! I have seen the lost Venus of Knidos!"

He raised his bandaged hands.

Thus he told me the story, and fell asleep. And I left him, glad that he was again his normal self, amazed at the story he had told me, and, whether the story was yet finished—whether the Sons of Musa, balked of the fulfilment of an ancient and terrible prophecy, would be content.

Of this I dreamed. And my dreams were scarcely changed by the conscious hearing of a shrill scream of fright and anguish.

I ran toward Allison's room. In the hallway I met and seized a girl, who struggled fiercely to escape. In the dim hall light I could see tattoo marks on her arms and neck. Like a wild thing she fought, sobbing and shrieking.

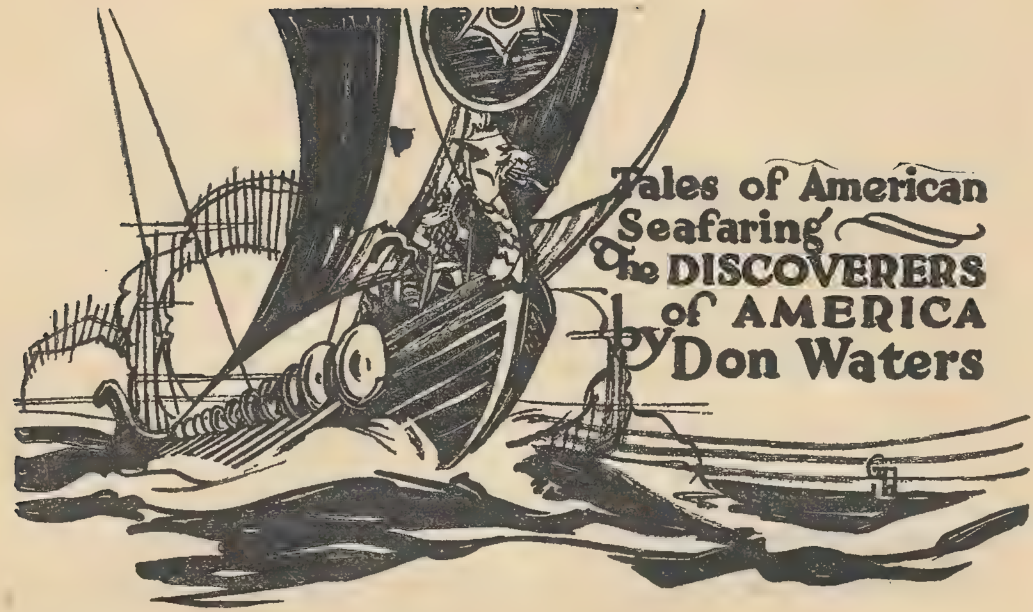
"The curse of M'lita!" she screamed. "The fire of Allah has destroyed the white goddess. Her curse was upon me! So said the priest; so said the priest! I have made atonement, but the curse is still upon me! I shall be destroyed—as the white goddess was destroyed! The fires of heaven shall kill me! The curse of the priest shall kill me! The eyes of the men—the men at the cross—waiting for me! They drove me—drove me!"

Suddenly the figure in my arms grew limp and I thought the girl had fainted, but surprizingly she twisted from my arms and ran shrieking into the night.

"I go to them, I go—" her voice was lost.

I hastened then to Allison. He was lying upon his bed with a knife buried in his heart.

Tales of American Seafaring
The DISCOVERERS of AMERICA
by Don Waters



FROM the Parry Islands far up within the Arctic Circle, down the thousands of miles of coast line of both continents of the Americas, clear to the rocky, storm-lashed headlands of Cape Horn, there is scarce a prominent feature, river mouth or bay, cape or island, but has its seafaring tale to tell. The dragon ship of the Viking, the high-pooped galley of Spain and Portugal, the clumsy looking vessel of the Dutchman and the huge line of battle craft of the English, have each in turn ploughed their sea furrow, splashed their anchors in American waters, written their chapter in American history and sailed away to their last resting place. From the very beginning, ships and sailors have played a big part in the development of our country. The exploits of military leaders and conquerors on land have ever been described minutely by the scribes of their times, while the often far greater deeds of the sea have gone unrecorded. History devotes page after page of description to some land battle and frequently a great sea fight that occurred at the same time receives but a brief notice.

So but a meager few of the tales of early American seafaring will ever be told for in most cases, the actors went the way of all flesh, silent and dumb, their epic stories dying with them. Long before modern Europeans sighted the coast line of America, nations flourished, evolved their civlizations, grew rich and then perished. The rank jungle of Central America grows thick over long dead cities; the lava flow of Mexican volcanoes covers the ruins of buildings centuries old. The finger of time has almost rubbed out their hieroglyphics; the slow disintegration of nature has crumbled their temples. They have slipped back into the enveloping limbo of the past and we can but speculate as to their origin.

Did they wander away from the so called "birth-place" of the human race out of the valley of Mesopotamia, migrate slowly north and east, work up onto what is now Siberia and cross the Bering Sea from island to island of the Aleutians? Or did the human drift cross the Sahara to the coast and push on over the waters of the Atlantic on the long voyage across to South America? Perhaps they even essayed the still longer sea passage across the Pacific. What were the ships they used, oar or sail, high-peaked, slim-sparred, shallow draft vessels or double-ended, square-rigged, open craft?

Perhaps the first explorers of the New World were not seafarers at all. The continent of America may in their time have been connected with Asia and, dry shod, they might have made they way across. Who knows? One man's guess is as good as another's. No bit of parchment has ever been found to tell the tale; no chipped stone has ever disclosed the secret. The manner in which the first of mankind reached the continent of America is the beginning of a long line of mysteries that the past jealously hides. The trail they took has been effectually obliterated by the passing years.

So the slow centuries moved on till other men came who left their records behind. Distorted as these accounts are by word of mouth telling, still the thread of truth can be seen running firm and true through every line. Three historical legends come down to us and recount the first tales of white men who ventured across the ocean and landed on the shores of America. The "Saga of Eric the Red," the "Saga of the Flat Island Book," and the "Saga of Thorfin Karlsefni," are epic tales of hard fighting, intrepid explorers, that make the blood run fast to read. The very names these Northmen bore, the "Skull-cleaver," the "Ship-chested," "Thorstein the Swarthy," conjure up pictures of broad-chested, upstanding fighters to whom fear was unknown. The impression their names leaves on us is a true one for the courage of these seafaring marauders was proof even against the superstitions that beset Europe of their times.

In their open, "dragon" boats, they ventured far away from their homes among the rocky fiords of Scandinavia, when other nations looked on the great, mysterious sea as a dread and terrible thing. By modern standards, these vessels appear ill-fitted for long ocean voyages and yet the men who sailed them asked no odds from sea or storm. They were double-ended and undecked, like the boats still in use by primitive people all over the earth. They were laid lapstreak, one plank overlaying another and calked with tarred neats hair oakum. The rudders were secured to the starboard or steerboard side of the vessels a little forward of the stern post. The construction of these early Norse vessels is rather curious in that only the bottom planking was fastened rigidly to the frames, the side planking being merely tied with flexible withes or bast ropes to the ribs. This made an elastic boat that would give when in a seaway and eased the strain on the frames and timbers, but it also made for a very wet boat. In reading of the exploits of the Vikings, there are several allusions made to their ships opening up and sinking under them.

THESE Norse craft of the early iron age were primarily rowing vessels, yet they also worked well under canvas. They were manned by some of the finest sailors who up to that time had ever heaved on sheet or belayed halyard and on the wind or reaching, their crews knew well the trick of trimming their sail so as to get full advantage of every yard of it. The Vikings were the first Europeans who had caught the knack of hauling the leading edge of their sail taut "on a bowline" and the art of working their high-stemmed boats toward the wind efficiently. With willing backs bending to the oars in a calm, or heeling gunwales swash to the shove of the wind on the large, loose-footed squaresail, the Northmen headed south, harried the coast cities in Briton and France, turned their sharp prows westward, explored the island of Iceland and founded a colony on Greenland in the latter part of the tenth century.

Almost five hundred years before Columbus' caravels left their wakes in the blue waters of the Caribbean, Lief Ericsson, the son of Eric the Red, on a voyage from Norway to Greenland lost his reckoning and, sailing past his desired landfall, discovered America. A second voyage was planned but rough weather and contrary winds frustrated this attempt. "Their ship was, in sooth, driven hither and thither over the sea." They must have landed at different points, probably in Greenland and Iceland, for the voyage lasted from spring till the beginning of winter when they returned home unsuccessful in their attempt. Eric took the failure rather philosophically for he says, "More cheerful were we in the summer, when we put out of the firth, but we still live and it might have been much worse."

It took more than one failure to dishearten these doughty wanderers of the trackless sea pathways. They set sail again and reached that land they had sighted far to the westward. Here they found wild grapes in such profusion that they gave the land the name of Wineland. There was no lack of fish and game; it was a place pleasant to the Vikings for they wintered there calling the camp, Liefs Booths.

Thorvald, the brother of Lief, with thirty picked men came later to Liefs Booths, spent two winters there and explored the surrounding country, landing on many of the islands in the vicinity. Their navigation at that time was of the hit and miss variety, largely dead reckoning. From their vague descriptions of the sun's altitude, later navigators place the location of Liefs Booths anywhere from the coast of Labrador, south to Rhode Island.

Thorvald seemed not to have much consideration for the natives as once while exploring the coast, they sighted three queer looking mounds. Upon investigation they found them to be upturned canoes with three Indians asleep under each one. They killed all the Indians or Skraelings as they called the natives, except one fortunate savage who escaped. There was a large Indian village near and the survivor of the massacre spread the alarm. The Northmen got back to their ship, put out the war boards on both sides and awaited the attack from the infuriated Skraelings who advanced in their canoes on them from up the bay. During the attack, Thorvald was mortally wounded under the armpit with an arrow "that flew in between the gunwale and my shield." Before he died, he expressed his wish to be buried "on that headland which seemed to me to offer so pleasant a dwelling place." Here on the headland, named Crossness, Thorvald was buried. The name probably was suggested by the fact that a cross was erected on the spot, for about this time numbers of the Norsemen had become Christians.

With their characteristic thoroughness, when they embraced Christianity, it was in no half-hearted way. Olaf Tryggvesson, another Norseman, when he was courting the sister of the Queen of Norway, tried to induce her to become a Christian before their marriage. Upon her refusal, he disdainfully flung his glove in her face and called her "a faded heathen hag." Needless to say, the courtship was over and the fight was on.

A few years after Lief discovered America, Thorfin Karlesfne with three or four ships and a hundred and fifty or sixty men, left for Novia Scotia to establish a colony. Firearms had not come into use at this time and the Northmen were equipped with much the same weapons that the savages of America bore. As they made no effort to keep on friendly terms with the "Skraelings," and lacked the guns that the later explorers carried, they found that their stay meant constant warfare. When we recollect the fighting code of the Vikings, "A man should attack a single enemy, fight two, and not yield to three, but that he might, without disgrace, retreat from four," there must have been some fierce fighting around the Norse settlement in Novia Scotia. Thorfin's men were but a handful and under the constant pressure of superior forces of the Indians, they were finally forced to evacuate their settlement. They remained for three years and then returned in 1010 to Greenland with a cargo of furs and timber. In fact one of the inducements that caused the Northmen to come again and again to America was the profusion of fine ship timber that grew thick, close to the water's edge.

These roving, plundering seafarers who touched on the shores of America, and there were a good many expeditions, came but for a brief stay. The ever present menace of the savages precluded any attempt to form permanant colonies. As John Fiske says—

"The most convincing proof that the Northmen never founded a colony in America, south of Davis Strait, is furnished by the total absence of horses, cattle, and other domestic animals from the soil of North America until they were brought hither by the Spanish, French and English settlers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."

They came, loaded up their vessels with cargoes of grapes, cut timber, traded for furs with the natives and returned back to Greenland where they had well-established settlements, leaving no tangible evidences of their stay. Their temporary shelters succumbed to the ravages of the elements in a few years and but for the records left in the sagas, their visits would be forgotten.

AT THIS time, Europe was just beginning to emerge from the dark ages and was beset by superstition, each man a law unto himself, when murderer and assassin, robber baron ashore and pirate afloat, effectually throttled any organized expeditions except those under the banner of the Church. There probably were other voyages to America but the records are so vague and unreliable as scarcely to be taken as evidence. European fishermen driven helpless before strong northwest gales, cast ashore, their vessels shipwrecked, their crews murdered or living out their lives captives of the Indians, probably in dozens of cases died without ever having the opportunity of conversing with any of their countrymen.

The Northmen's visits to America were forgotten almost entirely. No expedition from Europe confirmed the presence of a continent to the westward till 1492. Then several events made the voyage across the "Sea of Darkness" inevitable. The compass had come into general use in the thirteenth century. A vessel could now keep on a true course. The invention of the astrolabe and the jackstaff followed. These were but crude and clumsy predecessors of the quadrant and sextant, yet by their use it was possible to "shoot the sun" and get a latitude within a few degrees of the truth.

The Spice Islands of the Indian Ocean, the silks and jewels of the East, intrigued the avarice of Europeans. The reason for Columbus' voyages was not so much to discover new lands as it was to find a route to these wealthy eastern countries. In fact, after making four trips to America till the day he died, Columbus vehemently maintained that the islands he found were outlying parts of the Indies. And from this mistaken idea, the natives of North America are still misnamed Indians.

Christopher Columbus, born in Genoa, shortly before the middle of the fifteenth century, soon took to a seafaring life. At fourteen he went to sea as a common sailor upon the Mediterranean. Seafaring at that time consisted of hazardous voyages, each one a daring enterprise for the Mediterranean was swarming with freebooters. The States of Italy were waging constant petty warfare with each other. Piratical craft scoured those narrow seas in search of prizes while armadas outfitted by private nobles, were persistently on the lookout for unprotected or weaker merchant vessels. Loot seemed to be the aim of a large part of the population of those lawless times ashore and afloat. But in spite of the risks and dangers, Columbus chose a seafaring career. While his judgment might sometimes have been at fault, he never could be accused of cowardice.

In 1477, he made a voyage to Iceland and later wrote a treatise on the conditions in that country. It is barely possible that while in the north, he may have heard of Lief Ericsson's trips to America, still in all his writings now existent, no mention is made of those daring pioneers. He was of a very studious nature, was familiar with Latin and had studied astronomy and mathematics. The journey of Columbus was no blind attempt to prove that the earth was round for at the time, he was one of the most learned geographers of Europe. He was the author of many works on navigation, seamanship and weather conditions and a map maker whose services were in great demand.

While the crews of his vessels might have been ignorant of any of the simple facts of geography and navigation, Columbus was well versed in all the learning needed to command an expedition. The old yarn that they expected at any time to sail off the edge of the earth might have dismayed his crews, but he knew far better. Almost fifteen hundred years before, Ptolemy, the Egyptian mathematician, had not only proved that the earth was a globe but had fixed the circumference of the equator at 20,400 miles and the length of a degree at 56.6 miles. This was well known to Columbus. From his studies, he conceived the idea that by sailing westward, the earth being round, he could reach India. That the "Sea of Darkness" was bounded by Asia on the west, was a matter that many men believed. Evidences were not lacking. Curiously carved pieces of driftwood had often come ashore on the Cape Verde and Azores. There were even a couple of bodies found once of men of an unknown race, washed up on the beach of one of these islands. There could be little doubt, land lay to the westward and Columbus made up his mind to reach that land.

He finally gained an audience with King John of Portugal and laid his project before the court. His proposal for the voyage was rejected for several reasons, chief among them because the Portuguese saw no reason for giving a poor Genoese navigator the honors and guarantees that Columbus demanded. He well knew the value of his services for he wanted in case his voyage proved successful, to be made viceroy and governor-general of all new territories discovered, to receive a tenth of all wealth acquired, to be supreme judge in all disputes concerning those territories and riches, to be allowed to finance an eighth part of any future ventures and to receive like amount of the profits.

This did not please the Portuguese who reasoned that if there was so much in a voyage of discovery, they would make it themselves. King John having secured the sailing plans that Columbus was to use, sent out a ship to the Cape Verde Islands ostensibly on a trading voyage. From here the captain had orders to sail westward using Columbus' plans and make his way over the route so carefully explained. But the Portuguese, not having the courage to put far out on that vast unknown stretch of Atlantic, soon turned back to Lisbon. The frightened sailors protested—

"You might as well expect to find land in the sky as in that waste of waters."

When Columbus heard of this double dealing, he was disgusted and indignantly left Portugal to try to interest the Spanish in his idea. Here at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, he met with many vexatious delays. During this time Columbus' brother, Bartholomew, made a journey to England and France to find backing in either of these nations for the westward voyage. He had but little success however and in Spain, Columbus had less. Finally deciding it was hopeless, age was creeping slowly over him, alternately buoyed up by hope or cast down by despair, as at times he seemed near to receiving royal sanction or met with some fresh rebuff, Columbus decided to leave Spain and make the journey to France. For almost twenty years he had lived with his vision. His hair had turned white, his step had slowed down and his dream was no nearer fulfillment than when fresh born in his mind in the seventies.

POVERTY stricken and neglected, Christopher Columbus, almost fifty-six years old, still held true to his ideals and was as firm as ever in his belief that a short and easy route to India lay to the westward. He had not abated one iota in his demands for honors and shares in the enterprise and saw but little hope that Ferdinand and Isabella would ever meet his demands. He actually was on his way out of Spain when the meager few who had faith in him, filled with anxiety, immediately got into communication with Queen Isabella. Urged on by their frantic pleadings that an opportunity never to be again presented, was slipping away, she assented, posted a rider to overtake Columbus and inform him that the long-waited-for sanction was at last given.

To Isabella must go a large part of the credit for the discovery of America. Once she favored the enterprise, she not only induced the King to concur but even went as far as to agree to pawn her jewelry to finance the trip. Filled with religious fervor at the thoughts of Christianizing the hordes of heathen who inhabited Asia, she pushed the plan forward rapidly. The finances of Spain were in very poor shape. For almost eight hundred years, Spain had been at war with the Moors and at this time, the struggle had just ended. The surrender of Granada had taken place. The Spanish flag floated over the Alhambra; the Moors were evicted but the long struggle had left the victors financially impoverished.

However, if money was scarce, King Ferdinand in order to please the Queen, readily found ways of raising the necessary equipment for the journey. The town of Palos, a little to the northward of Cadiz, for some small infringement of the laws, was penalized and forced to provide Columbus with two caravels, armed and equipped for a period of twelve months. Columbus was to pay the crews advance money of four months wages. As soon as the real object of the expedition became known there was dismay and consternation in Palos. It became almost impossible to ship a crew. Ferdinand granted immunity for all past offences to any one who would sign up for the expedition. Even then, many who were in jail preferred to remain there rather than embark on such a terrifying voyage and it may be added, that the Spanish prisons of the fifteenth century were no very pleasant places for prolonged sojourning. Owners of vessels liable to be seized for this desperate enterprise used all their powers to keep their ships out of the way. There were various petty riots and disturbances over the royal orders for every ship-owner felt that if his craft should be selected, he would never see it again once it sailed.

Finally Alanzo Martin Pinzon, a wealthy ship-owner and navigator and his brother, Vicente Yañez, who also was a skilled navigator, became interested and only then did the success of the undertaking become assured. The Pinzons were influential men, related to many of the seafaring inhabitants of the vicinity and when the word was passed around that they were sponsoring the expedition, things moved rapidly along. Three small vessels were secured, two barks or caravels, and a larger vessel. They were the square-rigged *Santa Maria*, or *Capitana*, of 100 tons and 52 men, Columbus' vessel and the flag ship. The *Capitana* was ninety feet long, single-decked and about twenty foot beam. The other two were even smaller and were not decked amidships. The *Pinta* and *Niña* were three-masted, lateen-rigged vessels being only of about fifty tons each and carried a complement of but eighteen men.

Finally the moment for departure, so long in coming, arrived. The *Santa Maria* led the way under Columbus' orders and followed by the other two each commanded by one of the Pinzons, on Friday, August 3rd, 1492, just at daybreak, the three small ships hardly as large as some modern Hudson River schooners, largely manned by jail birds and the desperate characters of a lawless time, sailed out of the harbor of Palos on a journey that changed the history of mankind. Hardly had the expedition gotten fairly under way before trouble developed. The *Pinta*, which had been commandeered by the authorities from Gomez Rascon and Christobal Quintero, broke her gudgeons and the rudder became unshipped. Columbus suspected Rascon and Quintero who unwillingly had been forced to accompany the expedition of causing the trouble in the hope their vessel would be left behind. The fleet put into the Canaries, repairs were made and on the sixth of September, again got under way.

Columbus kept two logs, one reckoning for the crews which fell far short of the real distance run, and the other with the true course and mileage logged. It was necessary for him to do this because the further the vessels got away from home, the more the fears of the ignorant mariners on board became inflamed. The weather was fine and calm but little rough seas being met with and except for the imaginary fears of the crews, the voyage would have been a pleasure trip. They safely passed through the weed and kelp of the Sargasso Sea and on September 22nd, entered clear water again.

Shoved along by the steady trade winds, the armada made good time, too good to suit the crews who began to fear that they never would be able to work their way back over the route dead into the wind. Day after day passed and the looked-for land did not appear. Columbus himself began to be worried when by the first of October, the endless stretch of waters still tumbled ceaselessly all around and no sign of land smeared its dim gray smudge across the far horizons. Mutiny was brewing, and only the fact that they felt that Columbus was their one hope in guiding them back towards home saved him from being thrown overboard by some of the criminal characters he had shipped at Palos. The last two weeks of this voyage till land was sighted was one of those fine examples of leadership that we so often read of in the annals of the sea. Columbus alone by sheer will power inducing this whole command to keep onward in spite of their veiled threats and entreaties to return to Spain.

FINALLY after persistent pleadings from his pilots, he ordered the cours changed two degrees to larboard and the three ships headed west south-west. If he had kept on and not made this change, he would have landed on the coast of Florida and the whole story of the Spanish occupation of America would have been changed. The spirit of his crews was almost to the point of mutiny now. The voyage hung balanced on the edge of insurrection when signs of land became increasingly prevalent. Flocks of birds above, land weed and even pieces of fabricated driftwood in the water below, the formation of the clouds, all unmistakable signs of the nearness of land increased in distinctiveness. Columbus in a frenzy of nervousness, for fear that he would be forced to turn back when he was sure his goal was almost in sight, scarcely closed his eyes from day to day.

At ten o'clock on the night of October 11th, he was pacing the poop deck of the *Santa Maria*. He glanced over the port side and was electrified by the sight of a moving light as though some one ran along on land with a flaring torch. Doubts were expressed as to the truth of his deduction but in a couple of hours, land was sighted by Rodrigo de Triana, a sailor on the *Niña*. By two o'clock on the morning of October 12th, 1492, the long-sought-for sight was visible to everyone on board, a low lying coast not five miles off. At daybreak, a landing party led by Columbus went ashore, took possession of the land in the name of Spain and called the island San Salvador. The discovery of America had begun. 1492 marked the year that began an era of exploration and exploitation, of discovery and of loot, such as the world had never known before nor will ever know again.

Columbus touched at several islands, inquiring for the Grand Khan firm in his belief that he was close to the Cathay that Marco Polo had described. There is a touch of irony in this for China lay a half a world away and Grand Khan and all his race had been driven out a hundred years before.

The little flotilla crossed the Great Bahama Bank and landed on the coast of Cuba still searching for Cipango. But they met with no kings and saw no rich cities although reports of gold were received often from the natives. On November 20th, Martin Pinzon deserted in the *Niña* which was the fastest of the three vessels. Pinzon's treachery was due to his desire to reach Spain first with the news and claim the reward. On Christmas morning, the *Santa Maria* took the ground so hard that although every effort was made to refloat her, the surf soon broke her up. Columbus was now left with the little *Pinta* which was far too small to carry the crews of both vessels. The timbers of the *Maria* were built into a blockhouse, her guns were mounted and forty men were left at La Navidad or Fort Nativity on Hispaniola, that is now San Domingo.

Columbus set sail again in the *Pinta* and two days later, met the *Niña* Pinzon having stopped to search for gold. The two vessels put forth, were separated by a storm and after many vicissitudes, Columbus landed on the island of St. Mary in the Azores, where the Portuguese governor acting under orders from King John, imprisoned a landing party who had gone ashore to give thanks for their safe deliverance. Columbus put up a bold front and demanded the release of his sailors. After five days, he was successful and set sail again. Another storm overtook him and he ran before it under bare poles for shelter into the Tagus.

His story became known and he was invited to Lisbon for an audience with King John. Not till then did the Portuguese fully realize what they had lost when they allowed Columbus to go to Spain. There was a half-hearted plot hatched to assassinate him that came to nothing for the Portuguese well knew that he was not an important personage and if he were harmed, it might mean a war with Spain. So the weather moderating, he left Lisbon and arrived in Palos in a couple of days. The *Niña* came in soon after and Martin Pinzon was so mortified that Columbus had arrived before him and exposed his treacherous conduct that he died "from shame" a few days later. Columbus was invited to attend court at Barcelona and made much of, even being allowed to sit in the presence of the King and Queen, a rare honor extended to royalty only.

Plans were gotten under way for a second expedition. How different was this from the first! Gentlemen of fortune, soldiers and adventurers flocked to Columbus' standard by the hundreds, all drawn to him by the lure of gold. There was not the slightest doubt in any one's mind but what the water route to riches had been found. Columbus must have viewed this eagerness rather cynically remembering his difficulties in getting a crew for his first voyage, for although he had but intended to take 1200 men on the second trip, 1500 finally sailed.

When they arrived at La Navidad they found the fort destroyed and all the garrison gone. The Spanish who had elected to remain had gotten into difficulties, first by brawls among their own company and finally with the natives. The particular events that led to the massacre seemed to have been the Spanish soldiers taking to themselves "three and sometimes four native women apiece." This ended the first Spanish settlement in America.

Columbus made two more voyages, gained vast territory for Spain and as his reward, died forgotten and neglected. The wealth of the Indies he had promised was not to be found in the Bahamas and his voyages cost Spain far more than they returned. His enemies discredited his achievements. Isabella, his one staunch friend, died and Columbus soon followed, never doubting but the land he reached was Cathay where gold and jewels were to be found—just a league or two beyond.

Columbus had been called the discoverer of America, yet without detracting one bit from the magnificence of his exploit, this is hardly true. It is as reasonable to assert that Franklin discovered electricity. Columbus led the first organized expedition, started the persistent minds of men toward the land he found and was the first of a long list of men whose explorations and discoveries finally convinced Europe that the land across the Atlantic was a new hemisphere. While Columbus' voyages were the means of Spain's becoming established on the western hemisphere, it took a half dozen later voyages before it slowly dawned on men's minds that it was not Cathay nor Cipagano, not the Island of Brazil and the Seven Cities, nor the country of the Grand Khan that he had discovered. Magellan's daring voyage down the coast of South America and through the Straits into the Pacific a quarter of a century later completed the series of events that proved conclusively that America was a country separate and distinct from Asia.

SPAIN was first in this new country yet England was a close second. To show how close, a paragraph from a letter written by the junior Spanish ambassador in England to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella reads as follows:

> "The people of Bristol have, for the past seven years, sent out two, three or four light ships—caravels—in search of the Island of Brazil and the Seven Cities according to the fancy of this Genoese."

"This Genoese" was John Cabot and the letter was written July 25th, 1498 less than six years after the first voyage of Columbus. The English from Bristol were already groping to the westward with their exploring expeditions a year before Columbus made his departure from Palos. In fact even before then as far back as 1480, John Jay, a merchant of Bristol had sent out two ships on a voyage westward across the North Atlantic to attempt to discover the same mythical Island of Brazil. These vessels were under command of Thomas Lloyd, one of the ablest English mariners of his time. The records of this trip are very few. About all that is known is that they sailed from Bristol, rounded the north of Ireland and held a general westward course for nine weeks. A violent tempest overtook them and drove them back before they sighted any unknown land. Nothing came of this attempt and of the following ones that the Spanish ambassador mentions. These privately organized expeditions set sail, ventured till shortage of provisions or stress of weather forced them home without proving anything and it was not till after Columbus' voyage that the presence of land to the westward became a certainty.

The expedition led by Cabot was the first English attempt that proved successful. The stories of John Cabot and Christopher Columbus have many similarities. They were both natives of Genoa, both began their seafaring careers on the Mediterranean, and each independent of the other, had conceived the idea that a short and easy route across the western ocean led direct to Asia. John Cabot, or Zoanne Caboto as it was in Genoese, with his family immigrated to England about 1484, and immediately began to try and interest King Henry in his plans.

It was not until March 6th, 1496, however, before he was successful. The King granted letters patent and authority to John Cabot and his sons, Sebastian, Lewis and Santius—

> "Leave and power upon theyre own proper costs and charges to seeke out, discover and find whatsoever isles, countries, regions or provinces of the heathen and infidels, which before this time have been unknown to all Christians."

Any merchandise or riches gained by the voyage were to be entered duty free at Bristol, the crown to receive a fifth of the net gains.

On May 2nd, 1497, the expedition set sail on a ship named the *Mathew*. She was but a very small craft, probably about the same build and size as Columbus' *Nina* and *Pinta*, for she carried but eighteen men aboard. They cleared the Irish coast, headed north and then steered boldly to the westward. The winds were variable and shifting, the *Mathew* was typical of the craft of her day, no witch for windward work and Cabot was not able to hold a very true course. But he persistently edged her toward the setting sun and on June 24th, fifty-two days out of Bristol, land was raised ahead. It proved to be what now is called Cape Breton Island at the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Cape North was named Cape Discovery and the Island of St. Paul opposite was named St. John as that day was the fête day of St. John the Baptist. The flag of England was planted on Cape North as well as the flag of St. Mark in deference to the fact that Cabot had become a naturalized citizen of Venice.

The soil was fertile, it was summer time and the days were warm and pleasant so naturally Cabot thought he had reached the northeastern part of Asia. In a flurry of excitement, wood and water were taken aboard, the anchor was hove up, the sails set as quickly as possible, to reach England with the news of their discovery being the one aim of all on board the *Mathew*. Passing over the Newfoundland Banks, immense schools of codfish were sighted. The fish were so numerous that the sailors on the *Mathew* were able to catch great numbers of them by the simple expedient of lowering wicker baskets weighted with stones overside. The prevailing westerly winds that had proved such a handicap on the outward voyage made for a quick homeward run and on August 6th, about three months after his departure, Cabot arrived back in England with his marvelous tale.

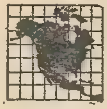
To show his appreciation, Henry VII presented John Cabot with ten pounds "to go on a spree." Although his exact words might have been different, he probably said in substance when he received Cabot's report:

"Fine work, John! Here's ten pound. Go out and get drunk."

As the King had not spent another cent on the voyage, Cape Breton Island alone with an area of over three thousand square miles came to England at a rather low figure.

The King was very pleased at the results of the voyage and another was planned to start in the spring. As it was believed considerable wealth would be found, the King advanced quite a bit of money toward this expedition as well as promising John Cabot a pension of twenty pound a year, Henry VII also agreeing to furnish ten armed ships and provide Cabot with all the prisoners he desired for a crew, "except such as are confined for high treason."

The new expedition fitted out and sailed from Bristol in April, 1498. Very little is known of this second expedition. Cabot reached the coast of America, explored northward, trading for furs with the Indians until he got up into the pack ice latitudes. Here his crews mutinied, refusing to push any farther into the ice. The expedition headed south exploring the southern and western coast of Greenland till he was again among the icebergs. They then turned and headed toward warmer latitudes. They touched at Cape Breton Island and continued down to the thirty-eight line of latitude. Here their stores became exhausted and as the country bore no resemblance to Asia, they returned home discouraged, hardly knowing just what land they had explored. John Cabot died soon afterward and his son, Sebastian, later entered the employ of England as a navigator.



JOHN CABOT'S northern discoveries set the stamp of Great Britain on that part of the new world and the flag of England, first planted on Cape Breton Island, soon began to flap in the breeze in a score of places. The names, Frobisher and Cook, Hudson and Davis, one by one began to appear on the maps of the northern coast line of America.

To the southward, the Spanish were slowly working west and south, inaugurating a reign of loot and barbarous cruelty that makes one shudder to but read of the atrocities they practiced on the natives in their frantic scramble for gold. Between the two, the French in the first part of the sixteenth century, made contact with America. Francis I of France had little respect for papal bulls that so generously were partitioning out the new lands between Portugal and Spain. He sent word to Charles V of Spain, inquiring, "by what right he and the King of Portugal laid claim to the earth." He felt that, France, too, was due her share and commissioned corsairs to sail out and collect it wherever they could.

One of the most enterprising and successful of Francis' privateer commanders was a native of Florence, Giovanni da Verrazano. In 1523, he distinguished himself by capturing a treasure caravel that Cortez had loaded deep with part of the loot of Mexico. Next year, in a ship with fifty men aboard, he crossed over from France to Cape Fear on the Carolina coast, worked northward, discovered the Hudson River and explored inland on what is now Rhode Island. To Verrazano really belongs the honor of discovering what is now the northern part of the United States. Verrazano's history from this time on is shrouded in mystery. Like many another early seafarer, his records are very vague.

The Spanish claim that he was captured and hung by them as a pirate in 1527 while another story relates how he was made prisoner and devoured by cannibal Indians in the same year. In a letter written aboard his ship, the *Dolphin*, in the port of Dieppe in Normandy, July 8th, 1524, Verrazano gives an extended account of this voyage, describing the coast, the habits and appearance of the natives and the conformation of the country very minutely. And yet even as late as 1524, Verrazano imagined the land he saw was either directly connected to Asia or that there was a passage way through it leading to Cathay.

From this time the work of discovery went rapidly on. Spanish, English and French entered into a hectic scramble with one another for the territory of the new world; even Portugal and Holland came in for their share and the era of discovery merged into the period of exploration.

It is difficult to realize that but a third of a century over four hundred years have elapsed since the little *Santa Maria's* broken timbers were built into the first European building in America. Today, the capital of the island of Cuba which Columbus found inhabited by credulous savages, has a larger population than the capital of Spain did during his time. Events have crowded fast upon each other in those intervening four hundred and thirty-three years. Of all the rich territory Spain acquired in America, there is not one country left the Spaniard can call his own. Portuguese and Englishman, Dutch and Frenchman, finally the fighting fleets of the Yankee, effectually ejected that travesty of government that misruled the rich lands the galleys of Columbus had won for Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

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RAILROADS KILL ROMANCE

by Faunce Rochester

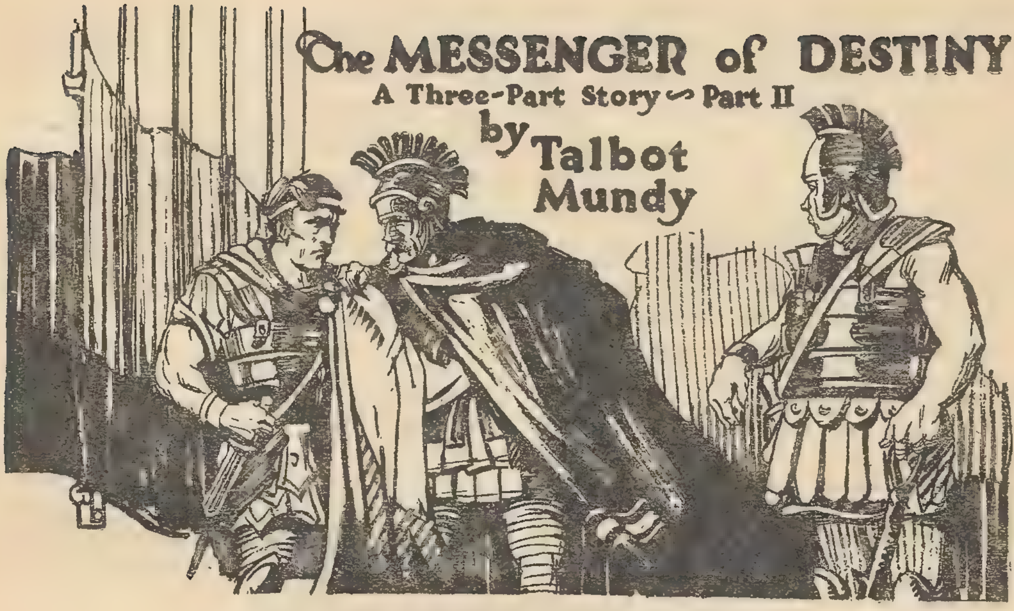
FOR a score of years many thousands of hardy men had dared the dangers of the plains and round-the-Cape voyaging to reach the Pacific and find gold. Many thousands responded to the Pike's Peak discoveries and filled the cañons and gulches of what is now Colorado. Settlements were well established from Canada to Mexico on the Pacific coast. Nevada was invaded by gold-hunters. All this was before the rich placer diggings in Montana, far more easily accessible, were discovered.

The miners in the Northwest worked from the coast, east. Idaho was exploited before Alder Gulch blazed into fame. The Civil War smothered all commerce on the lower Missouri. Up to 1864 only six steamboats arrived at lonely Fort Benton. Seventy such craft arrived during 1866-7. During the latter year there were from thirty to forty steamboats plying between Fort Benton and the mouth of the Yellowstone. On May 20, 1866, the *Deer Lodge* left Benton and on her way down me tthirty-three boats bound up river. In this year twelve cents a pound was the general freight-rate. Cabin passengers paid $300 fare. The captain received $200 a month. His clerk $150. Mate and engineer each drew down $125. And the pilot named his own figure and often received the astounding salary of $1200 a month. Those were the halcyon days on the Missouri, but let no one think steamboat travel was fast and safe. Perils began in the lower river. The *Sam Gaty* was boarded by Hicks' guerrilla band under the high wooded bank near Sibley, Mo. Some negroes and paroled Union soldiers were taken ashore and shot. All aboard were robbed. In the upper river the Indians fired on the boats. The pilot-house was protected by iron plates and the boats anchored in midstream. No gold rush contained exactly the same elements of danger as that to the Montana fields, and there is enough of romance, adventure and violence to fill innumerable volumes. The commercial glory of the river was doomed when the railroads reached Ogden—Union Pacific, 1869—and Bismarck—Northern Pacific, 1872—and Montana itself—the Utah Northern, 1880—and then the death-blow in 1887 when the Great Northern reached Helena.

The MESSENGER of DESTINY

A Three-Part Story — Part II

by Talbot Mundy



Author of "Tros of Samothrace," "Enemies of Cæsar," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

"PEARLS," cried Zeuxis, "and evenly matched. Tros, whom do you want murdered?"

"When I must kill, then it is I who kill," Tros answered coldly. "I am here to save Britain from Cæsar. With these pearls will I buy you, Zeuxis. Tell me how to put a stick in Cæsar's wheel."

Zeuxis stirred uneasily, but his eyes lusted for the glowing jewels in Tros' palm.

"I prefer not to be crucified, but your pearls rob me of my judgment, O Tros. There is a way, however. There is a way to control Rome—through a woman."

"I will have no truck with women," bellowed Tros. "I play a man's game."

But the next morning Tros and Zeuxis traveled through the seething streets of Rome to a gaudily pretentious villa overlooking the Tiber. Here Helene of Alexandria, the most brilliant figure among the glittering courtesans of Rome, a slave-woman raised by the adulation of the young bloods and the staid men of influence alike to a position of tremendous power in the affairs of the municipium.

Some said this enchanting woman was a spy of Ptolemy; others that she was the secret tool of Cæsar. Tros was determined to know the truth, and knowing it, to make Helene an instrument for the salvation of his beloved homeland.

And when Helene saw Tros of Samothrace, she feared almost instinctively that he was a man who would be no easy prey to her infinite guile.

"You are Cæsar's slave," Tros challenged, "a slave masquerading as a free woman."

"I am free," insisted Helene fiercely.

"You are a slave—you were a dancing girl in the court of Ptolemy. In Rome the penalty for such deceit is death. Help me and I shall not betray you."

"Master of men, you are cruel!" cried Helene. And then, "Go to Cato. Tell him you are Helene's friend. It is enough."

The next day Tros faced fierce Cato.

"You carry tales against Cæsar?" asked Cato sarcastically.

"I have come to save Britain," answered Tros. "Cæsar is drunk with the hog-swill of flattery. If he prevails against Britain, think you that Cæsar's greed for power will be glutted? Nay, you know Cæsar better than that. He will then sweep down on Rome. Cæsar will not be satisfied till he has the whole world writhing under his heel."

Old Cato listened, but he was not swayed by logic. He believed naively enough that, if need be, Cæsar could be curbed by quoting laws. Therefore, when Tros had left, he hurriedly had Helene of Alexandria arrested, for he knew that Tros had come in her personal litter and he feared that she had allied herself with Tros in some insidious scheme to betray Cæsar.

When Tros heard of the arrest, he became deeply concerned at the turn matters had taken, and feared for the safety of his Northmen who were secreted in Zeuxis' home. It was decided that Julius Nepos, chief instructor of the public gladiator's, might be able to offer some sound advice. So Tros visited the old warrior, who told him to lay his case before Pompey, who was due to arrive in the city that night. Meeting Pompey's cortège as it entered the Forum, Tros made himself known to the great leader, who promised him an interview at the Temple of Vesta.

Tros donned his gorgeous oriental cloak, and taking Orwic with him, he made his way to the temple. Fortune favored him, for as he approached, he noticed that the watch of the sacred fires was being changed, and that the Virgo Vestalis Maxima, head of the Vestal Virgins, was passing with her solemn retinue. Gathering up every iota of courage, Tros made bold enough to address her. Once more fortune smiled on him, and the woman who through the symbol of her chastity, could sway the degenerate

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"A Messenger of Destiny," copyright, 1926, by Talbot Mundy.

Roman mobs with a frown, who had even the mighty Cæsar at her command, gave him audience.

"Why does Cæsar say he goes to Britain?" Tros asked the Vestal.

"He has told all Rome that he will bring back pearls for a breastplate for the Venus Genetrix."

Tros drew forth from under his cloak a heavy leather bag tied with gold wire.

"These pearls," he said, "are superior to those that Pompey brought from Asia and put on exhibition in the temple. These were given me by those who ponder over Britain's destiny. *Virgo beatissima,* I crave leave to deposit them in your charge, as a trust for Cæsar's use, to be known as his gift."

"I can not acknowledge you—except to Cæsar," said the Vestal.

"I have a swift ship. Send me to Cæsar. If you think he can save Rome from anarchy, send me to save him from invading Britain, where he will squander his strength and wreak a havoc, while Rome dies, mad and masterless."

"Then," said the Vestal, "bid Cæsar look to Rome. Bid him keep his hand on Gaul, that when the hour strikes, he may leave Gaul tranquil at his back." This was uttered in a tone of dismissal, but Tros had one more favor to ask.

"There is a woman in the clutches of the prætor's men whom Cæsar employs to ferret out information—Helene of Alexandria—"

"That immodest slut!"

"Is Cæsar immaculate?"

"Cæsar is pontifex maximus."

But with a logic that could not be denied Tros finally succeeded in winning the Vestal over on this point also.

"You overstep your privilege," she said, "but I shall mention her to Pompey."

And when Tros and Orwic stepped out on the sacred portico, the whole conference seemed to Tros to have been some fantastic reverie, and the lictor on guard called out arrogantly:

"Move on. This is no place for loiterers."

CHAPTER VII

THE PRÆTOR'S DUNGEON

TROS' first impulse was to rush around corners and hunt for his men, but the sight of Orwic's bewilderment brought out his reserves of level-headedness.

"If they are near, then we will know it," he said, shrugging off the tremor he felt creeping up his spine. "If they are far, then only wits, not feet, can find them."

He strode up to the nearest watchman, who lounged against a shop-front entertaining himself by plaiting a wrist-thong for the vicious looking bill-hook of a weapon that he carried. The free man, an Etruscan, merely grinned when questioned, spat, and called Tros "pretty Hercules"—then asked whether the gods had use for money on Olympus. Tros produced a coin and the Etruscan spun it in the air. As he caught it back-handed and spun it again he answered Tros' question by putting another:

"Will they seat you in among the *equites?* Or are you an ambassador? The senate sometimes entertains ambassadors in very good seats, but the compliment fools nobody. Ambassadors in Rome pay richly for whatever courtesy they get. Me? I am paid to guard this goldsmith's. Is there no more money in Olympus? Have our Roman armies stripped that treasury, too?"

Tros showed him another coin and let the moonlight glint on it.

"Which way did my men go?" he asked. "Who took them?"

"How should I know they were *your* men? Who else should know it, either? I should say they were suspicious characters and that's what the prætor's man thought, evidently."

"Did he arrest them?"

Tros knew it would have needed fifty men to do that, and the clamor of it would have wakened Rome. There had been trickery, not violence. He asked any question that occurred to him, to get the man to talk.

"No. The prætor's man may have thought there was a bribelet to pick up, but he could not make those wooden-headed fellows understand him. What were they doing, lurking in the Vestals' portico? He had a right to order them away. But it is forbidden to make noises there at night, so he tried arguing, instead of sending his runner to turn out the guard. But I daresay he would have had to turn the guard out all the same—for they were dumb fools—if a fellow who looked like a Greek hadn't turned up and told them to follow him. They went like goats after a piping boy. Ss-s-s-t! Haven't you forgotten something? Gold, eh? Hercules, I thank you! If I were't afraid to lose my sinecure, employment being none too plentiful for free men nowadays, I might advise you to go hunting for your men not far from Pompey's school of gladiators. Things being as they are, I don't dare to give advice; the owner of this place I'm paid to watch is one of Pompey's clients. What breed of barbarian is that one?"

He pointed to Orwic, who stood like a statue, moon behind him, peering into gloom along the Via Sacra.

"I would give a month's pay to see you and him in the arena! You should wield a club, like Hercules, or take the *cæstus*. He looks like a *retiarius*—as agile as a leopard—look at him! See how he supples his loins when he moves!"

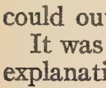
"Would you know the Greek again who led my men away?" Tros asked him.

"Maybe. But I also know on which side of the street the sun shines. Even in the senate there is only Cato who tells all he knows. Perhaps he likes to have stones thrown at him! For myself, a little bread and wine and olives, with a ticket for the circus now and then, seems better than wagging the tongue and what comes of it. But I have seen that Greek in company with Zeuxis, who is one of the contractors who—but I am not a woman. My peculiarity is silence as to matters that are no concern of mine."

The news that Zeuxis had a hand in the betrayal of his men confirmed Tros' instant guess. It should have staggered him. It merely stirred imagination. Where a man of less faith in his own high destiny might suffer for a moment from depression or bewilderment—Tros put on instantly his full protective armor of dissimulation, hid his consternation—swallowed it—suppressed it—grinned—and put his wits to work. He knew the Greek mind. He could outplay Zeuxis!

It was no use going to him to demand an explanation and redress; his wily host would certainly have taken all precautions to establish innocence; direct means would be met with plausible obscurity—countered with guile. He must be indirect, and swift. There was one certainty, if only one—that what had taken place within the Vestals' palace would be kept inviolably secret. He must turn that, somehow, to advantage.

"You have relieved my mind, my friend," he said to the Etruscan. "Now I know where I can find my men, and that is worth another coin or two—here—pocket these. For a moment I feared my men had met such a fate as that woman Helene's, whom the prætor dragged out of her house! What happened to her? Was she thrown into the Tullianum?"



"HARDLY!" The Etruscan laughed. "She is worth too much to be let rot in that hole. Not even Cato would do that with her. Cato is economical. That Tullianum is a pesthouse; there's a dark hole where they lower them and let them perish of disease or hunger. I have seen it; I was sent in with a message for Septimus Varro, who was the custodian until they caught him substituting corpses for the prisoners whose friends had money and were free with it. Varro was crucified; so money isn't everything, after all; but I never heard that the men who bribed him suffered. If you asked me, I should say that some of Cato's men will disobey him and take as good care of Helene as they think her fashionable friends will pay for. Cato might have her scourged—he's a stern man, Cato is—but that won't happen until tomorrow or the next day, when he tries her case in public. Meanwhile, she'll be lodged under the prætor's office; you can see the front wall of the cells from here, but where she'll be is 'round behind; they'd be afraid to keep her where her friends might rescue her."

"She'll be guarded closely."

"Not a doubt of it. But prætor's cells are not the Tullianum. Any one with money in his hand can see a prisoner on one excuse or other—that is, if the torturers aren't busy with them; now and then they torture some one all night long to save the magistrate's time next morning, but you can generally hear the outcry when they're doing that. You see, they can't take evidence from slaves unless they're tortured first, and any one who's nota Roman citizen is liable to have his testimony questioned with a hot iron. That's a good law; it makes citizenship valued—not that citizens aren't liars, but they've a right to be privileged over mere colonials and slaves and aliens. If everybody were allowed to tell lies in the law-courts how could justice be administered?"

Tros walked away, but the Etruscan went on talking to the night. Orwic stepped forth like a shadow from among the statues in the Forum and followed Tros, who led toward the prætor's office. There were no lictors on the portico, they being personal attendants on the magistrate; in place of them a guardian as grim as Cato, without Cato's dignity, yawned while he watched three underlings throw dice beside a lantern.

"Halt!" he ordered, as Tros started up the steps. "No visitors. The prætor will be here soon after sunrise."

"I have urgent business," said Tros.

"Who cares? Have you a permit?" the

man answered. "Jupiter! Am I to be disturbed all night long by the gallants who buzz for that woman Helene like flies after fruit? Get hence!"

But already Tros stood on the portico, and though the guards ceased throwing dice to stare at him and, rising presently, reached into the shadow for their weapons, none showed any eagerness to be the first to try to throw him down the steps. Their chief, a fat man with a double chin and strange, old-fashioned keys hung from a big ring fastened to the girth on his big belly, puffed his cheeks out and exploded, tilting back his stool on one leg:

"Jupiter! What now? Did you hear me tell you to be gone? By sulfury Cocytus—"

"I have heard," Tros answered: "You have yet to hear. Come yonder and speak alone with me."

He strode along the portico and waited, leaving Orwic standing near the upper step. Inquisitive, astonished, curious—inclined to continue asserting his official consequence, but growing cautious now that he could see the gold embroidery on Tros' cloak—he with the two-fold chin said something to his men about observing Orwic and, arranging his own cloak over his great belly, shuffled toward Tros, his slippers rutching on the stone.

"It is no use, master. I have turned away twoscore of gallants, though they offered me enough coin to have bought the next election! There are definite orders. The prætor has—"

Tros interrupted him.

"Cackler! I have come from Pompey, who intends to set the woman free. Have you not heard that Pompey entered Rome?"

"By Venus, who did not hear? He and his men made noise enough! But what has that to do with me?"

"If you wish Pompey's favor you will let me in and let me speak to her."

"Nay, master! Nay, nay! It is all my place is worth! If Pompey wants to override the prætor's orders, let him come himself! I mean no disrespect for Pompey. Bacchus knows, I drank to him but two hours since. I wish him the dictatorship. But Gemini! What sort of guardian does he think I am, that he should send a stranger to me—and no writing—not a signet—nothing? Tell me your name. Who are you? Offer me a proof that you are Pompey's messenger."

Tros could invent a tale more suddenly than any Parthian could wing an arrow on its way. His amber eyes, glowing in moonlight, looked like pools of honesty; his bravery of bearing and his air of power in restraint aroused conviction. It was next thing to impossible to guess that he was lying. Even that familiar of courthouse perjury and criminal intrigue believed him.

"Pompey was in great haste," Tros said, speaking swiftly. "As an act of generosity to Cæsar, he intends to set that woman free because he knows she has been doing Cæsar's errands. He will make no scandal. Therefore, he will first see Cato in the morning. Meanwhile, he dreads that the woman, in fear, may reveal such information as she has, and to prevent that he has sent me to assure her she shall go free. There was neither time to write a permit, nor would that have been discreet; such messages are best conveyed by word of mouth. He told me, though, that I should find you are a man of excellent discretion who would have no scruples about doing him this favor when the matter is explained. I am to tell you, you may look to him for favorable notice."

"DID he tell you my name?" asked the keeper of the keys, a shadow of suspicion dimming credulity.

"No. Neither he, nor any of his friends remembered it. He called his secretary, but the secretary had forgotten, too. A nobleman like Pompey has so many interests, it would be strange if he could name you offhand."

"He is likely to forget this service just as easily," the other grumbled.

"Aye, he might," said Tros. "Great men are not fastidious rememberers! But that is my responsibility; you may depend on me to keep you in his mind. Lead on; I have to make haste; I must report to Pompey before daylight."

Doubtfully shaking his keys—although he did not any longer doubt Tros' story—the man led the way into the prætor's office, down a dimly lighted stairway and along a passage stifling with dampness and the smell of dungeons.

"Look you!" he said, turning suddenly where a guttering candle threw distorted shadows on an ancient wall. "Is this a trick? We lost two prisoners a week ago through people passing poison in to them.

They dread the torture and their friends dread revelations! You're not meaning to slip her a dagger? No phials—nothing of that sort? Cato would have me scourged if I should lose one as likely to tell other folks' secrets as she is. Well—you can't go in. You'll have to speak to her through the grating, and mind you, I'll watch. I want to see both your hands the whole time."

Tros clasped his hands behind him. The custodian led toward a heavy oaken door and hammered on it with his keys. The thump and jingle brought a dozen answers from the near-by cells, including one that cried out from the dark for water:

"I will tell all! Only give me a drink and I will tell all I know!"

"Time for that in the morning!" said the jailer. "Silence!"

He shook his keys again and slapped Helene's cell door with his flat palm.

"Mistress!" he whispered hoarsely, "wake up! Here's a visitor—and as you love your life, don't let a soul know I admitted him! Understand now—if you get me in trouble over this—"

"Who is it?"

Fingers appeared through the grating and a nose was pressed against it.

"Keep those hands down! You may talk to him, but if I see a thing passed in there'll be trouble! Now," he said, signing to Tros. "Be quick and keep your voice low. There are three score ears, all listening."

Tros stepped up to the grating, keeping his hands clasped behind his back where the custodian could watch them in the candle-light.

"Water! Water! I'll be dead if you don't let me drink! I'm dying now!" a voice croaked from the darkness.

"Silence!" roared the jailer, "or I'll let you know what thirst is! Shall I fetch salt?"

That threat was enough. The passage ceiling ceased to echo to the cries. There fell the silence of a tomb, irregularly broken by the clank of fetters and the dripping of some water set where the man in agony of thirst could hear it.

"Who are you? I can't see you," said Helene's voice.

"Tros of Samothrace."

"You! You bird of evil omen! Was it you who caused me to be put in this indignity? I have friends who will—"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh! I received word that Cato had ordered you seized. I have worked to release you, and I know now I can manage it."

"How? Who?"

"Never mind. Cato is determined to have you scourged as an example, and the more your friends try to dissuade him the more determined he will be."

"By Isis! It is I who will prevent that! I have death-drops hidden. Even Romans don't flog corpses!"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh! There are greater ones in Rome than Cato. I have influence. By noon tomorrow you shall go free. But remember—you will owe your liberty to me and you will have to recompense me."

"How? They will have looted all my property! The rascal who owns my house will have put his bailiffs in already. They have chained my slaves. It will take me months to recover, even if I don't catch plague in this pest-hole! The worst is that Cæsar is sure to hear of it. He'll say I'm an incompetent and never trust me any more. I'm ruined!"

"No," said Tros, "but you might easily be ruined if you failed to keep in my good graces! I will make your peace with Cæsar, if you—"

"You? You are Cæsar's enemy!"

"Not I. Now listen. It is Pompey who will order your release, but he will do it proudly and against his will. Don't trust him, but pretend to trust him. When they let you out, go straight to the house of Zeuxis and pretend to Zeuxis that you don't know it was he who betrayed both of us."

"He? Zeuxis? What has he done?"

"Nothing that can not be undone. I will tell you when we meet at Zeuxis' house. He wants my pearls. He thought I had entrusted some of them to you—"

"The Greek dog!"

"Watch him! Aid me to make use of him and I will stand by you as long as you deserve my confidence."

The custodian rattled his keys.

"Make haste!" he urged. "There's no knowing when they'll bring in prisoners. It's all my place is worth to have you seen down here!"

"Are we agreed?" Tros asked, his face against the bars, for he was curious to see what clothing they had left her and whether she was locked into a less filthy dungeon than the others. Suddenly Helene pressed her lips between the bars and kissed him.

"Aye! Agreed!" she said, and laughed. "I am no imbecile, Tros of Samothrace! You need me, or you never would have stirred a finger to release me. You shall have me!"

"Come!" exclaimed the jailer. "Come now! You have been here long enough to tell the story of the fall of Troy!"

He took Tros by the arm and tugged at him. As Tros turned, scowling at the prospect of intrigue with any kind of woman, he could hear Helene's voice, half-mocking but vibrating with excitement, as she whispered:

"It was Tros who founded Troy! Argive Helen owes a recompense to Tros! I think his gods have set this table for a feast of the affections! Go and lay an offering on Venus' altar, with a gift from me beside it!"

CHAPTER VIII

POMPEIUS MAGNUS

DAWN found Tros and Orwic striding gloomily along the Via Sacra, turning and returning until they knew by heart the statues and the very cracks between the flagstones. Dust was stirred into the nostrils by the city slaves, who appeared in an army at sunrise to sprinkle and sweep, their overseers watchful to pounce on coins or jewelry. One slave was flogged until he lay half stunned for trying to secrete a coin he picked out of a gutter.

Very shortly after dawn demolishment resumed where Cæsar's agents had bought up the ancient buildings, and the usual cursing and thrashing attended the first speeding up of sleepy slaves, dog-weary from the day before. Draught animals were better treated, having cost more money; there was scarcity of horses, and the price of meat was higher than when Spartacus had raided the Campagna, but since Pompey drove the pirates from the seas there had been no interruption in the streams of slaves that found their way to market, so a slave of the laboring sort cost very little. It was reckoned economical to work a man to death and buy another in his place.

The hurried sweeping done, on temple porticos and at an altar in the middle of the Forum, shaven-headed priests went through a ritual of invocation. There appeared to be a competition between temples to see which could hurry fastest through the service, for the wind had risen and the clouds of dust made the increasing heat unbearable. Dust gritted in the teeth and filled the nostrils; it was underfoot again in gray drifts almost as soon as the sweeper gangs had vanished.

Shops were opened, and the yawning shop-assistants sunned themselves, greeting their neighbors and cursing the builders who obliged them to clean shop so constantly. There was a sudden roar of voices and a fire-brigade, all clad in leather and brass helmets, streamed across the Forum carrying their ladders, ropes, poles and leather buckets—hundreds of buckets all nested together, for use by any slave or citizen they could impress into the service. Their united shout was like a war-cry:

"Crassus! Crassus!"

In his absence Crassus' agents were neglecting no chance to make money for their master; they preserved Rome from the flames, but he was richer by each fire they extinguished, though they forced the passers-by to form the bucket gangs and drove the neighbors' slaves into the hottest smoke where blazing danger lurked.

And Pompey not yet. It was two hours after dawn before he came, on a big bay horse and magnificent in golden armor, attended by a host of friends and followed by a roaring crowd that choked the Via Sacra, thundering his praises. There was no name too good; imperator was the mildest; half the crowd was calling him dictator, he occasionally making modest efforts to dissuade them, frowning a little and gesturing between the intervals of conversation with the friends who rode beside him. It appeared the friends were urging him to take the crowd at its word. He shook his head repeatedly.

No armed men followed him. There were a dozen men on horseback and at least three times as many walking, all wearing the deep blue-bordered toga of the *equites* and each man followed by his personal attendants. Pompey's own slaves were innumerable. It was their task to keep the crowd from swarming in on the procession, and their method varied from remonstrance to the use of heavy cudgels.

In among the horsemen behind Pompey was a litter borne by slaves and loaded heavily with gifts; between the folds of linen that protected them from dust the glint of gold shone now and then; it was not Pompey's way to ask a favor of the gods without enriching their establishments with plunder from the fanes of other gods less fortunate.

The crowd swarmed in among the statues, yelling, and a company of Pompey's slaves ran in among them, handing out free tickets for the races and the ensuing combats between gladiators in the circus maximus—which speculators bought up promptly. Tros and Orwic each received a ticket thrust into their hands as they worked their way into the crowd toward the semicircle formed by Pompey's friends and their attendants facing the shrine of Vesta. It was only by dint of struggling that they came within two paces of a horse's heels.

Pompey, in the middle of the semicircle, swung down from his horse and strode with all a Roman's dignity toward the entrance of the shrine, his white cloak that he wore against the dust revealing as it fluttered in the wind flashes of his golden corselet. The slave-borne litter followed him. In the porch before the shrine the slaves knelt, waiting until Vestals' women came, white robed and wearing rosaries, to bear the gifts within. At each gift that they took up from the litter all the women bowed to Pompey, he saluting with his right hand raised. He was a splendid figure of a man, who had the trick of standing like a god in armor—which was two thirds of the secret in his influence; the mob roared satisfaction at the very way he walked.

WHEN the gifts were gone he strode into the shrine alone, as if he were the sun-god come to visit the undying fire. As imperator, triumvir and priest, his eyes were hallowed and his person sacrosanct. He never doubted it. No shrine was closed to him—although the very Roman brothels gasped when it was known that in Jerusalem he had invaded the Jews' inner shrine to look, as it was said, into the face of Jahveh. Pompey, but not many Romans other than the ritually ordained priests—and they but seldom, at appointed times—might see the sacred fire and the historic image of archaic Pallas, brought by Æneas from burning Troy; but there was scepticism on the faces of his friends, and there were dry jests on their lips. Tros heard some conversation:

"Gemini! If Julia dies in spite of all this, he'll regret those costly gifts!"

"What odds? The Vestals will find some suitable explanation. Even Vestal Virgins die, you know."

A shrew-faced man, between the two who had just spoken, laughed.

"The point is, Pompey has paid handsomely for something. Wait and see. If he should win the Vestals' influence—"

"Phagh! All he can expect from them is 'thumbs up' if his fancy gladiator gets the worst of it. The Vestals serve their pontifex. I told him only last week, he must find some way of weakening the Vestals if he hopes to outbid Cæsar for the mob's vote. Bury one of them alive at the Porta Collina—you can prove a case against any one by torturing a dozen slaves—and—"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!"

"What frightens you? Convict one of unchastity, and for a year to come the sweet unsensuous crowd would talk about abolishing religion! That would cost Cæsar his grip on the plebes. It's the plebes who—"

"Who would have you crucified if they could hear you talking! Have you placed your bets yet on the races? Which team do you favor?"

"I don't know yet. I usually bet on white, but I have heard Helene the Alexandrian has a team of Cappadocians that she will enter, and they say she has adoped red—the gods know why! You'd think a woman of her laxity would choose the virgin's color! I have heard, too, that she wished to drive the four-horse team but was forbidden. If I knew who is to take her place I might bet on those Cappadocians—I've seen them—gorgeous beasts! And besides, I consulted the auguries—"

"Hah! And were informed, no doubt, that red might win unless the white should have the best of it! Who wouldn't be an augur! They make money either way—no need to bet! I'll wager you weren't warned that the prætor's men would seize Helene yesterday! There's a rumor that Cato means to have her scourged and driven out of Rome."

"Jupiter omnipotens! Is Cato crazy?"

"Probably. He'll do it, if he's sure it would annoy some political enemy. He likes to be pelted with stones and vegetables. It makes him feel honest. And he thinks nobody will dare to kill him."

"He'll discover his mistake if he scourges Helene! If he threw her to the beasts the mob might stand for it, because they'd have the spectacle. But scourge her? I think not. If he did that, whoever killed Cato could be sure of the mob's verdict."

"It wouldn't surprize me to know that Cato would enjoy death if it came to him in that way! The man isn't in his right mind. Did you hear how he gave his wife to young Hortensius? They say Alilia, his new wife, can't endure him; he goes bare-foot through the streets and thinks she ought to do the same! I've heard—Venus! Look at Pompey's face! Has he been trying to seduce a Vestal? Somebody has slapped him!"

Pompey was looking indignant. He was flushed; and though he tried to hide embarrassment by adjusting his cloak as he strode from the shrine, he only succeeded in looking too proud to share his annoyance with any one else. His very gesture, as he drew the cloak around him, was a service of warning to friends not to question him. His lips were shut tight.

Tros tugged the nearest Roman's cloak.

"I have urgent business with Pompey. He expects me. Make way."

"Jupiter, what insolence! Stand back!"

"If I should have to shout to him," said Tros, "you might regret it. I am Tros of Samothrace."

"Oh. He who stopped him at the bridge last night? Save yourself trouble then. Pompey has changed his mind; your news, whatever it is, has ceased to interest him. Stand back!"

IT WAS no use courting dagger-blades, and from the rear the crowd was roaring a new tumult, drowning speech. Though Tros had shouted at the limit of his lungs there was no chance that Pompey's ears would pick out one voice from the din. The crowd had swarmed up on the statues. There were men on the backs of other men—all yelling, and the pressure from the rear to catch sight of Pompey as he mounted his horse was prodigious. Dust was mixed with the sweat on men's faces. Tros could hardly breathe.

However, Orwic was beside him, smiling as he always did in battle, masking his emotions under enigmatic phlegm.

"Stiffen yourself! Seize my foot!"

Tros sprang on Orwic's shoulders, balancing himself by setting one foot on a man's head, sparing his victim a swift smile that excused the liberty. Then Pompey could not help but see him; he was gorgeous in his cloak—a black-haired, handsome figure, like a gold-embroidered god, miraculously raised above a sea of faces.

Pompey hesitated and Tros—salt-sea-taught to use his helm between the waves—made up his mind for him. He sprang, as if thrown by the roars of the mob, and came down like a wedge between two of the horses that blocked the way. They reared and shied away from him and through the opened gap between their shoulders, quicker than a horseman could have drawn a dagger, Tros strode up to where the slaves held Pompey's horse and Pompey hesitated, frowning.

So they met on level flagstones, eye to eye and Pompey lacked the great advantage of the night before, when he could talk down proudly from his horse and Tros must look up like a poor petitioner. True, if Pompey had made but a sign, there would have been a dozen daggers buried in Tros' back before he could have turned; but Pompey was a lot too proud to trifle with that sort of cowardice; he threw his hand up to restrain his men and faced Tros with a curling lip.

"Mercury! You reach your goal!" he said, eyeing him steadily. Then he lowered his voice, so that not even the slaves who held his horse could overhear. "So you are Cæsar's man! You come here plotting against Cæsar—and yet serve him? I have heard you bearded Cato in his den. Cato himself said it! Fool! The very whispers of the senate reach my ears! And now what? I am told that I should not harm Tros of Samothrace! I come to read the embers for an augury—my wife is ill—I seek foreknowledge of her destiny—and I am told I should give no offense to Tros of Samothrace! Have you the ear, then, of the Vestals? Are you Cæsar's spy?"

Tros answered him without betraying that he recognized the danger he was in:

"Pompeius magnus, if the Vestals so admonished you regarding me, shall I believe they were the first to speak of me? Or did a spy report my movements? Did the man who stole my men say how it happened they stood leaderless? Then you—deliberating whether it were safe to throw my men into the arena—wondering what influence I might have—doubting your spy's word, possibly—inquired about me of the Vestals. Is it not so?"

"Meddler! What do you in Rome?" demanded Pompey.

"Triumvir, I turn my back on Rome the instant you return my men to me!"

"It seems to me that Tros of Samothrace will harm himself," said Pompey. "Men armed with daggers in Rome in the night are not immune from interference because Tros of Samothrace pretends he owns them! Are they citizens? Are *you* a citizen? Are you a peregrine? Are you a citizen of any state allied to Rome or even recognized by the senate and the Roman people? Have you any rights in Rome whatever—of person or property? And, if those men are truly yours, may you possess them under Roman law? If not yours, are they free—and if so by what right? If they are not free, then who is their master?"

IT APPEARED to Tros that the triumvir was lashing himself into a rage deliberately—possibly to justify a course of conduct not in keeping with his dignity, whatever law might have to say about it. Pompey's eyes —full, lustrous and intelligent—eyes normally suggesting rather tolerant autocracy, betrayed unsteadiness. He was expecting something—bullying and threatening in hope of forcing information without actually asking for it.

"It appears to me," he said, "that Cato has arrested the wrong malefactor. He should set Helene free and question your activities!"

Tros held his tongue, aware now of the deadly nature of the danger he was in.

"It was not of your men you wished to speak when you accosted me at the bridge last night," said Pompey.

There was still that look of speculation in his eyes—almost of irresolution. He seemed to be giving Tros an opportunity to volunteer some information that he needed, but, not knowing what it was he needed, Tros kept silence. Pompey, potential autocrat of two-thirds of the world, had far too many sources of information to make it safe to trifle with him—too many irons in the fire for any visitor in Rome to touch the right one at a guess without more luck than any reasonable man could look for.

"You have sent a man to Ostia," said Pompey suddenly. "How did you enter Italy? By land or sea?" Then, as Tros still held his tongue, "I am told you landed at Tarentum. Your ship will come to Ostia?"

That prodded Tros on his Achilles' heel! That ship was to her master and designer as a woman is to most men. Tros lied desperately—instantly.

"That ship is Cæsar's! I have authority from Cæsar to use all Roman ports."

He drew out from his cloak the parchment Cæsar had been forced to sign in Gades—unrolled it—flourished it—thrust it under Pompey's eyes, pointing to the seal—the beautifully modelled figure of Cæsar, naked, in the guise of Hermes. Pompey did not even glance at what was written; the proud sullenness of his eyes increased.

"So you claim Cæsar's protection? You had nothing that you wished to say? No message?"

"Not now. I demand my men."

"Let Cæsar attend to it!" said Pompey. "Let me see that parchment."

He held out his hand but Tros thrust the parchment back under his cloak. There was nothing on it stating that the ship was Cæsar's; to the contrary, it definitely named Tros as the owner, merely authorizing him to enter and to clear from Roman ports for purposes of commerce. There were doubtless flaws in it that any legal mind could drive a wedge through instantly; it was even doubtful whether Pompey would need lawyers; since the war against the pirates his authority to interfere with shipping had been almost absolute.

Tros' back was cold; he sensed a climax now with the same nerves that always warned him of a coming storm at sea. But Pompey was an expert at deferring climax:

"That is all then," he said, turning to his horse, and at his gesture three intimates strode from the ranks. They pretended to help him to mount, but insolently shouldered Tros out of the way, turning their backs to him. Two horsemen beckoned, making a narrow gap in the ranks, sneering as Tros went by. The very crowd, still yelling Pompey's praises, knew he had been rebuffed; a thousand eyes had seen him flourishing the parchment. It was usual to try to thrust petitions into great men's hands, and though such documents were usually tossed to secretaries who ignored them, it was customary to accept them formally unless the individual petitioned wished to snub the applicant.

So the crowd mocked. When he made his way to Orwic's side and they began to force a way together through the throng some humorist made fun of the mustache that drooped on either side of Orwic's mouth. Then Tros' gold forehead-band came in for comment. In another minute he was forced to doff his cloak and fold it to prevent its being torn off. Some men thought he was a Parthian, come craving relief from Crassus' legions; they yelled at him "Crassus! Crassus!" until those who could not see believed the fire-brigade was coming and divided down the midst.

So, down that rift, bruised, sweating and indignant, Tros and Orwic bolted into the comparative seclusion of the side-streets, where they turned at last into a fly-blown cook-shop and, discovering a table in an alcove at the rear, ate food concocted from the meat bought from temple priests—whose incomes were increased enormously by selling the fat carcasses donated by the pious for the satisfying of the gods.

"I wager we are eating Great Jove's heifer!" Tros remarked. "Be that an omen! Fragments from Olympus' table fortify us! If the gods of earth and sky are not asleep they—Orwic—has it ever dawned on your imagination that the gods ought to be grateful to us men for giving them an opportunity to use their virtue?"

"Nothing dawns on me at all," said Orwic. "It appears to me we have a lost cause. We are two lone men in Rome, and all Rome seems to be our enemy."

"No, for there are honest men in Rome," Tros answered. "I have made an enemy of Pompey. He is irritated because I went over his head to the Vestals. Arrogant aristocrat! He will hardly dare to disobey them openly, but neither will he swallow what he thinks is an indignity. A man in Pompey's shoes needs only to nod and there are fifty men at once to do whatever work he thinks too dirty for his own white hands. Indeed, I tell you, Orwic, a whole host of gods has reason to be grateful to us for an opportunity."

CHAPTER IX

THE CARCERIES AND NEPOS, THE LANISTA

TROS' attitude was brave, but in his heart was nothing to support it. He was on the deepest bottom of despair. The need of keeping up appearances for Orwic's sake alone prevented him from giving way. He was a man who lived by energy; the exercise of will invoked new powers of imagination. But now that there seemed no concrete thing to do, his very will dried up.

Thrusting the unfinished food aside he rallied himself by summing up the facts, inviting Orwic to discover a solution. He slew flies with a spoon, arranging them in geometrical designs on the cook-shop table—one design for each fact, involutions indicating intricacy; then, thumbing off the gravy from his plate, he tried to work the calculus by smearing all the facts together into one plan.

"Zeuxis—who doesn't know yet that I know his treachery. That one's Zeuxis. He believes I'm carrying a thousand pearls under my cloak. Zeuxis, or else Nepos—very likely both of them—sent word to one of Pompey's agents that my men would make good gladiators. Probably the agent acted on his own responsibility, consulting Pompey afterwards—perfectly simple—sent one of Zeuxis' servants, whom they'd recognize, to tell my Northmen—in Gaulish, which they'd understand sufficiently to get his meaning, that I'd come out of the Vestals' palace through a back door, or by an underground passage or some such story. They supposed I'd sent for them—and walked straight into an ambush."

"Helene—presently at liberty and dangerous. There's Helene—that one. Has her eyes on me—anticipates a drama of affection, and the least she'll do will be to stir the jealousy of half a dozen dagger-digging sons of *equites!* Cæsar's spy. Probably knows enough to blackmail any one in Rome excepting Cato. Very likely she can help by an appeal to Cæsar's agents, of whom Memmius, a candidate for consul, is the foremost in the public eye. Call that one Memmius—a very doubtful quantity—a politician; anything that he does will be paid for through the nose by some one. All those other flies near Memmius are politicians, each with his palm itching for a bribe—which each of them would pocket and forget!

"The senate. Those flies are the senate—not sitting—too hot for them, more ways than one, and the Forum too noisy, not counting the danger of riots. Villas in the country are more dignified. Only a small committee of the senate holding meetings behind locked doors in the temple of Castor and Pollux. There's the committee—probably inaccessible, but said to be plotting against Pompey, whom they hate nearly as much as they hate Cæsar and with equal cause.

"Cato—prætor and a member of the senatorial committee. If we *could* see the committee Cato would be there, and he's the only man in Rome who dares to challenge Pompey openly; but the rest of them hate Cato because he rebukes them for corruption. Cato can enforce the law as long as he's prætor and he'll be venomously angry because Pompey has compelled him to release Helene.

"I have made one mistake after another, Orwic! I believe two-thirds of Pompey's enmity this morning is accounted for by his having been told by the Vestals to procure Helene's liberty. He can't refuse. Their influence is much too artfully directed. They could turn all Rome against him. Probably he hates the thought of having to ask a favor of Cato, who will certainly hold out for terms. Cato can't be bribed, but he's a politician, always looking for the lesser evil; he would compromise, but like an undefeated swordsman.

"Pompey—he's that big fly—half out of his wits with worry. A good soldier and a rotten politician, drunk with renown—no doubt wishing he had not encouraged Crassus to go to Asia, since now he must stand alone against Cæsar. More than likely Pompey is encouraging Cæsar to invade Britain, hoping he may meet defeat. Pompey has a notion that by keeping my men he can force some information out of me, and if I could guess what he wants to know I might out-maneuver him; otherwise he will have them killed in the arena. He loathes the mob, and despises butchery, but he knows his influence is waning, so he will do almost anything for popularity. Spectacles — spectacles — doles of corn — anything; they say his agents scour the earth for wild beasts for the arena. Zeuxis undoubtedly told him of the pearls I brought from Britain; and though Pompey thinks too highly of himself to try to steal them, he wouldn't hesitate to let Cato take them in the name of Roman law. He very likely traded you and me to Cato for Helene! Now do you see what an error I made? Do you begin to understand the danger?

"Conops—nothing simpler than to catch Conops. Zeuxis has betrayed him. What then? My ship comes to Ostia and Sigurdsen drops anchor in the Tiber mouth. Pompey has authority to order out as many triremes as he wishes; there are always two or three available. They'll either blockade Sigurdsen or force him to run if he's lucky. If they do blockade him, he will soon run short of food and water."

"Run for it!" said Orwic. "You must leave your men in Pompey's hands and hurry to Ostia."

"I WILL die first! Tros answered, shaking the oaken table. "I expect my men to die for me. Shall I do less for them? Nay! What is duty for the man is obligation for the master! As the head rots, so the fish stinks! Orwic—"

Suddenly his amber eyes appeared to stare at an horizon. Parted lips showed set teeth and his fingers gripped the table edge.

"No cause is lost while there remains a weapon and a man to use it! I might go to Cicero. He corresponds with Cæsar. He has influence, and he is Cato's friend; but Cicero is in Pompeii, which is far off, and they say he is worried with debts and doubt. If Zeuxis told the truth—he often tells it when it costs him nothing—Cicero is planning to defend Rabirius for Cæsar's sake; if he will plead that rascal's cause before the judges he should not balk at protecting us!"

"Make haste then. Let us go to Cicero," said Orwic.

"No. He is a lawyer. I dread the law's delay. Nor will I cool my heels at the temple of Castor and Pollux until some senator comes out from the committee room to find out whether I will bribe him heavily enough to make it worth his while to promise what he never will perform! Nor do I dare to return to Cato; Pompey will have told him I am Cæsar's man, and I was with him only yesterday attempting to persuade him to turn on Cæsar! He will think Cæsar sent me to tempt him, meaning to denounce him if he fell into the trap—intriguing against Roman arms!

"No. Cato has probably undertaken to condemn my men to the arena, and will do the same for you and me if we attract his notice! That is just the sort of trick that Pompey would turn on the honest old fool—persuade him that my men are criminals, encourage him to have them butchered; then, supposing that the men are really Cæsar's, letting Cæsar know Cato is to blame for it, thus aggravating, he will think, the hatred Cæsar has for Cato. Do you see it? Pompey would get credit from the mob for showing eight-and-thirty victims of a new sort in the amphitheatre. Cato would get the blame. And Cæsar, so Pompey would think, by trying to avenge the insult, would drive Cato to join Pompey's party. Quite a number of important men might follow Cato when the crisis comes. Rome's politics are like hot quicksilver."

"You appear to me to know too much," said Orwic. "In my own land I have found the politics bewildering, and they are simpler. How can you, who are not a Roman, pick the right thread and pursue it through the snarl?"

Tros paused.

"Men are born with certain qualities," he said, reestimating Orwic—reappraising him; and there returned into his eyes that far-horizon look. "For instance, you were born with an ability to manage horses, which is something I could never do."

He mulled that over in his mind a minute. Then:

"Because I know ships and I understand the sea, it is a mean ship that will not sail faster under my hand than another's. Is it so with horses? Will a good horse, or a good team gallop for you faster than for me?"

"Undoubtedly," said Orwic. "What has that to do with it?"

"This—that I think the gods expect each one of us to play his own part. There is a part that Vestal Virgins play best, and there are other parts for you, and me, and for Helene—and even Zeuxis. It is not alone the great ones of the earth who— Let us leave this place! I saw a man who might be an informer hurry out and look too shrewdly at us as he passed the door."

He doffed his forehead-band and folded up his cloak, but even so he was too masterful a figure to escape the notice of the crowd. Men followed him and Orwic through the winding streets, accosting them in any fragment of a foreign tongue they knew. Thieves tried to rob them; half a dozen times Tros had to use his fist to save his cloak, until at last he struck one slippery Sicilian and sent him sprawling in the kennel. Instantly a cry went up that a barbarian had struck a Roman citizen! Three narrow lanes disgorged a swarm of loiterers whose life, endured in vermin-ridden tenements, was never raised out of its shabbiness except to see men slain splendidly in the arena. Rome's mob could rise as swiftly as the reeking dust, amuse itself a minute with a man's life, laugh, and disappear as casually as the knackers of the slaughter-yards returning home to dinner.

Orwic drew his dagger and the two stood back-to-back, Tros making no haste to display his weapon; through the corner of his mouth he growled:

"DON'T stab unless you must! Stand firm, look gallant and expect some favor from the gods!" Then:

"Citizens!" he roared, attempting to adopt the vulgar idiom that politicians used when cozening the crowd for votes, "One rattle of the dice yet! Hold!"

"Aye! Hold hard!" said a voice he recognized, and the Etruscan—he who was night-watchman for the goldsmith's in the Forum—elbowed his way forward, grinning. The whole crowd knew him; he appeared to have authority of some kind; they obeyed the motion of his hand and half a dozen men leaned back against the swarm behind them, vehemently resisting the efforts of others to get to the front.

"Porsenna! Let us hear Porsenna!"

The Etruscan smiled with the familiar ingratiating, confident good humor of a popular comedian, long used to waiting for the crowd to quiet down before he loosed his jests. But when the yelling had died down enough for one voice to be audible, he wasted no time on amusing them. He threatened.

"It will be a good show in the Circus Maximus, but perhaps you would rather riot now than get free tickets! I am on my way to get the tickets. What will Pompey's secretary say, if I should have to tell him you have injured two of the best performers? How many tickets then for the people in my streets? Home with you!"

He gazed about him, memorizing faces, or pretending to, and if he had been a prætor he could hardly have received more prompt obedience. With jests, and here and there a grumble, they implored him to remember them and melted away up side-streets, not more than a dozen lingering in doorways to assuage their curiosity. Porsenna grinned at Tros.

"A good thing for you that the man who

shares a bed with me is sick this morning! I had nowhere to sleep. And besides, it is true, this is the day I must distribute tickets. I get no pay for it, but people who want tickets have a way of keeping on the easy side of me, which makes life tolerable. We Etruscans love our bellies, and I assure you there isn't a house in all these streets where I can't get a good meal for the asking—that is to say, if they have anything, which isn't always. But there's always somewhere to turn for food or drink; I've noticed it never happens that they all starve on the same day. But have you found your men? No? Well, I'll find them for you. Only you must bear in mind I'm only a night-watchman and distributor of tickets, so you mustn't expect *me* to do more than show you where they are. I wouldn't have helped you just now if you hadn't given me a lot of money last night. You're a rich man and a stranger, and it always pays to go to a little trouble for folk who have generous tendencies. We Etruscans have a name for being sharp customers, but that's not true; we merely like the soft jobs and the good things and exert ourselves to get them. Let us come this way. Does it seem to you you owe me anything for that little service I did you just now?"

"Show me my men and I'll pay you handsomely," Tros answered.

The Etruscan led on through a maze of streets until they reached the valley below the Palatine, where an enormous wooden structure nearly filled the space between surrounding houses. The high walls were covered with electioneering notices in colored paint, and there was a constant pandemonium from cages, underground, where most of the wild animals were kept in darkness until needed for the public execution of Rome's criminals. There was a stench from an enormous heap of mixed manure that slaves were carrying away in baskets to be dumped outside the city, and the air was full of dust, besides, from heaps of rubbish being showered into carts.

There was a great gate at the end that faced the river Tiber, suitably adorned with horses' heads, weapons,, shields and crudely fashioned lions, but the public entrances were all along both sides, and at the farther end were stables built of stone, beneath which were the cells in which most of the prisoners were kept who had been sentenced and awaited death in the arena. In the open space at the end there were spearmen, but not many and they did not seem to expect to be called upon for action, merely staring with indifference at Tros and Orwic as Porsenna led them toward a wooden office at the rear, where there was a small crowd of men, not one of whom seemed satisfied.

"They grumble, they grumble, they grumble!" Porsenna remarked. "But if there were enough tickets for every one in Rome, what profit would there be in being a distributor? Would anybody think it worth his while to curry favor with us? Some folk don't know an advantage when they see it? Watch them struggle for the allotments! Good sweat and excitement gone to waste! If there is one thing in all Rome that is honestly apportioned it's the circus tickets, region by region. There are so many for each important politician—so many for the giver of the games—and the rest are divided equally to us distributors. Now watch me."

THE THRUST two fingers in his mouth and whistled, then threw up his hand to catch the attention of a man at the office window. The man recognized him, nodded and tossed a bundle of tickets on to a shelf.

"There. That's the way to manage it. Now I can get mine when the crowding's over. All that costs me is two tickets; and since I'll know where they are I can do a favor to some one in one of my streets by telling him where he can buy them. Now come this way."

Farther to the rear, behind the stables, in between two rows of racing chariots that stood with poles up-ended, was a stone arch with a barred iron gate providing access to steps made of enormous blocks of stone that led down steeply into gloom. A fetid prison-smell came through the opening, and at a corner, where the steps turned, there was one lamp flickering. A spearman, with a great key at his waist, stood by the gate and sullenly ignored the pleas of half a dozen women, one of whom, on her knees, had torn her clothing and was beating her naked breasts.

He recognized Porsenna instantly and drove his spear-butt at the woman to get her out of the way.

"No!" he said. "No! Get away from here! If you want to see your husband, get a permit from the prætor's office. Otherwise, get sentenced, too, to the arena; then they'll let you die with him! You wish to visit the dungeons?" he asked, grinning at Porsenna. "You and two friends? I would let *you* pass in free."

Tros took the hint and dropped two coins into Porsenna's palm, who cleverly hid one and gave the other to the spearman. The gate opened on oiled hinges and a wave of filthy air came through the opening as Tros and Orwic followed the Etruscan down the steps.

And now noise blended with the smell. Infernal mutterings suggestive of the restlessness of disembodied phantoms filled the atmosphere; the sound, the Stygian gloom and the disgusting stench were all one. On a stone floor in the midst of great square columns that supported a low roof three men played at dice by candle-light and half a dozen others watched them. All wore daggers; there were spears beside them, leaned against the wall; each man had as well a heavy iron club with a short hook and a sharp spike on the end. The dice intensely interested them; they scarcely looked up—snapping fingers and adjuring Venus to reward them for the sacrifices they intended to bestow on her.

The murmuring came through heavy wooden doors, in each of which there was a bronze grille at about the level of a man's face from the floor. All the doors were made fast by bars that fitted into sockets in the oaken posts. There appeared to be a perfect maze of cells, with narrow, almost pitch-dark corridors between them; and at the far end of the vault there was another set of stairs, of solid masonry, that evidently led to the arena or to some enclosure at one end of it. There was a charcoal brazier not far from where the men played dice and two clubs, similar to those the men had fastened to their wrists by thongs, were thrust into the red-hot coal. A slave was blowing on it, and the red glow shone reflected in his face.

The slave spoke and one of the men removed a hot club from the fire, wrapping a wet cloth and then a leather guard around the handle. Two who had been watching the dice followed him. A fourth man lifted out the bar that locked a cell door, and the three went in, he who held the hot iron going last. The fourth man shut the door again, not locking it, and went back to the dice.

There was a great commotion in the cell—blows, oaths, scuffling, a screech—then one long yell of agony that seemed unending, as if the victim never drew a breath. The dice-players took no notice. When the yell died to a sobbing groan the three came out again and one of them tossed the hot club to the slave who watched the charcoal brazier. The fourth man left the dice and went and set the bar in place. It was his voice that made Tros' blood run cold; he recognized it instantly. It was Nepos!

"Did you injure him?" asked Nepos.

"Not much. Just burned his fingers enough to teach him not to try any more digging. That's the third time he's tried to escape."

Nepos returned to watch the dice. The men resembled phantoms in the gloom; the candle-light broke up the shadows, distorting forms and faces, but the voice of Nepos was unmistakable.

"Who comes?" he asked, shading his eyes as he glanced at the three who were standing with backs to the entrance-steps, a puzzling light behind them.

"Porsenna—and two visitors," said the Etruscan.

"Visitors? Have they a permit? Who—what have they come for?"

"This nobleman has lost his men. I tell him he will find them here, though much good that will do him!"

"Who is he?"

Nepos approached. He appeared to be not the same man who had entertained Tros in his house. His ferocity, all on the surface now, had changed the very outline of his face—or so it seemed. Undoubtedly the gloom and dim light from the stairs contributed to that effect.

"TROS?" he said. "Tros of Samothrace? Who sent you here? That rascal Zeuxis?"

"I have come to find my men," Tros answered.

"Out! Get out of here!" said Nepos, flourishing his club at the Etruscan. Something in his tone of voice attracted the attention of the dice-players. They all came crowding behind Nepos.

"Well, I warned you I couldn't do more than show you where your men are," Porsenna remarked amiably. "You have heard him. He says I must go."

He turned toward the stairs. Tros, fingering his dagger, made as if to follow him but Nepos gestured to the others, who immediately cut off Tros' retreat and one man let Porsenna feel the point of his iron club as an inducement to go swiftly.

"You shall see your men," said Nepos. "Come."

He beckoned. If he was afraid of Tros he gave no sign of it although his keen eyes must have seen Tros' right hand at his dagger. Orwic drew his own short weapon and whispered to Tros excitedly:

"Don't follow him! Let's fight our way out!"

"No," said Tros, "we'll have to use wits. Daggers won't do."

He preferred to follow Nepos rather than be torn with iron hooks and clubbed. He let his dagger go and laid a hand on Orwic's arm to reassure the younger man, and together they strode behind Nepos down a narrow corridor that stank of ordure and wet straw. There were cell doors right and left, and at the end, below a candle on a bracket, a peculiarly narrow opening protected by an iron grille—so narrow that if the grille were swung clear on its heavy hinges only one man at a time could possibly have passed.

"Do they know your voice?" asked Nepos over-shoulder, his voice rumbling along the tunnel.

"Sven! Jorgen! Skram! Olaf!" Tros shouted.

There was instant pandemonium. A deep-sea roar of voices burst out through the grille:

"Tros! Tros! Ho, master! Lord Tros! Come and rescue us!"

The prisoners in two score cells all added to the babel, clamoring for mercy; they supposed some great official had come looking for a lost retainer and on the spur of the moment every man invented reasons why he should be set free. Nepos struck his iron club against the grille and threatened to send for hot irons, but the Northmen did not understand him and their chorus roared louder than ever. An arm protruded through the grille and Nepos struck it, arousing a curse that sounded like a taut rope bursting suddenly.

"Silence!" Tros thundered, again and again, but not even his voice quieted them.

"Master, we sicken! We die, Lord Tros! Release us! Let us out!"

But it suddenly occurred to them that if he spoke they could not hear, and there was no sound then except their breathing as they crowded at the grille. Tros let his wrath loose:

"This is what I get for trusting you!" he growled, in Gaulish. "Fine men! Follow the first lousy Greek who lies to you! Hopeless fools! Now I must buy you back like a job-lot of left-over slaves!"

He glanced at Nepos who was standing in between him and the grille.

"Whom should I speak to about freeing them?" he asked in Latin.

Nepos glanced beyond him to make sure that some of the men who had been playing dice had followed down the corridor. He laughed a little with the corner of his mouth, then gestured with his thumb toward the cell door.

"You must go in with them—both of you!" he answered. "Hand over your weapons. Have you anything else of value?"

Three men came along the corridor, striking the wall with their clubs.

"It would be against my inclination to hurt a man who has broken bread in my house," said Nepos pointedly.

Tros held his breath, determined instantly to plunge his dagger into Nepos, loose his men and fight his way out or be killed. But something in the tone of Nepos' voice arrested him. He recalled, in a flash as of intuition, that Nepos was a man of strangely mixed peculiarities and loyalties.

"Anything of value? Yes," he said. "I have this *tessera*." He drew up a broken disk of engraved ivory that hung on a cord around his neck, beneath his shirt. It was approximately half of an ancient ornament, irregularly broken off, its ragged edge inclosed in thin gold casing to preserve it. "My father exchanged *tesseræ* with Zeuxis' father—"

"Eh?" exclaimed Nepos. "What? Here, let me have a look at that. Has that Greek tricked me into sacrilege? If he and you are *hospites*—"

He gestured with his arm along the passage and pushed Tros in front of him.

"Go back there where it is lighter. I must know the truth of this."

THEY returned to the echoing half-light where the slave still blew at the brazier, the men with iron clubs retreating backward and then standing near to protect Nepos. But that grizzled veteran seemed totally indifferent to danger. He kept muttering—

"Jupiter hospitalis!"

Tros slipped off the cord over his neck and gave the *tessera* into his hand. Nepos pulled off with his teeth the gold band that protected the jagged edge and held the piece of ivory toward the candle-light.

"That might be genuine," he muttered. Then, sharp eyes on Tros, "Do you swear to me that Zeuxis has the other half of this?"

"Not I," Tros answered. "I am from Samothrace and therefore take no oath at random. But I swear to you—"

"By Jupiter hospitalis?"

"Aye, by Jupiter hospitalis, that my father and Zeuxis' father exchanged *tesseræ*, of which that is the one that I inherited."

"And has Zeuxis never given notice of repudiation?"

"Never. To the contrary, he welcomed me with such effusion that we never spoke of *tesseræ* at all. There was no need. I arrived at his house without sending him warning and he welcomed me with open arms."

"The Greek dog!" muttered Nepos. "Are the Greeks not bound by oath of hospitality? Great Jupiter! In Sulla's time a thousand Romans risked proscription for the sake of that oath! I myself— But are you sure the Greek knew? You say your father and his father exchanged *tesseræ*, but did Zeuxis know of it?"

"He did. Nine years ago in Alexandria he claimed my father's hospitality, on board my father's ship, when Ptolemy's men were after him for having said too much to the wrong listener. My father hid him in the hold between barrels of onions, and that was where I first met Zeuxis. It was I who took food to him, lest the crew should learn his whereabouts and drop a hint to Ptolemy's men."

Nepos began breathing through his nose, his windy gray eyes glinting in the candlelight. He stood with clenched fists on his hips considering, not Tros apparently, but the atrocity that had been done to his own person.

"Even if the Greek was ignorant, the oath was binding until publicly annulled," he muttered.

"Zeuxis is a Roman citizen," said Tros.

"Aye, that he is! These Greeks who become Romans need a lesson. They accept Rome's credit and deny her claims! They grow rich and they—this is too much Tros—"

He shook his finger under Tros' nose, as if Tros had been a party to the sacrilege.

"You, too, are an alien and may not understand Rome's principles. I tell you, I have seen men sent to this place, to be torn by animals, for crimes that were glorious deeds compared to this atrocity! I would prefer to see a Vestal Virgin immured living! An offense against *hospitium!* If Cato knew of it—"

"Send word to him," said Tros.

"No. That would do you no good. Cato is—what is it he calls himself?—not a philosopher—a logician—that's it, a logician. He would order Zeuxis crucified, but he would say that you should suffer for your own offense."

"Offense?" said Tros. "I haven't heard of one. Who charged me? Who tried me? Who has sentenced?' '

Nepos stared at him, incredulous. He appeared to think Tros was bereft of his senses.

"Your men," he said, "were caught redhanded lurking in the portal of the Vestals. You are not entitled to a hearing. An offense against the Vestals is beyond the law's arm, even as they are above it. They may not be mentioned in a court of law. No law can touch them. They may not be haled as witnesses. How then shall a magistrate try such a case? Besides, you are not Roman citizens, nor subjects of any kingdom that Rome recognizes—are you? Pompey himself ordered the lot of you—aye, you too—into the arena! He who came an hour ago with an order to send men to arrest you said that you, too, are accused of trying to intrigue with Vestals."

Nepos began drumming on his teeth with horny fingernails.

"I am not much beholden to Pompey," he said, musing. "And it irks me to be made his catspaw. I enjoy the death of criminals, and I have slain more enemies of Rome than any dozen men in all the Roman armies! I have never done a wrong deed yet. Let me see your right hand—raise it! Swear now by the gods of Rome and by your ancestors—have you had access to the Vestals? Have you spoken with them, or with one of them?"

"I may not answer you. There is an oath more sacred than the lives of many men," said Tros; and Nepos nodded—nodded half a dozen times, scratching his chin through the grizzled gray whiskers that met underneath it.

"There is a Gaul in here," he said, "whom we have used as an interpreter. Your men are ignorant barbarians, but if the Gaul understood them, you went into the Vestal's palace and were in there when Zeuxis' man led them away."

"That is as it may be," Tros answered. "I say nothing."

"WELL, if you have the Vestals' favor you are safe in the arena. They will turn their thumbs up when the time comes. I can send you against Paulus, who shall run you through the thigh—one can depend on Paulus; many a time I have used him to preserve a man's life, but it never worked unless the Vestals had a hand in it."

He went on scratching at his chin. The wretches in the cells around him made noises like caged animals, all sounds uniting into one drab, melancholy moan. There was a conversation going on between cells in the polyglot thieves' jargon that creates itself wherever criminals are thrown together—droning, wholly without emphasis, resembling an echo of what happened last week. Its effect on Tros and Orwic was as if death clutched at them, but Nepos and his men seemed not to notice it—not even when a man in agony from their inflicted burns yelled imprecations.

"There is no place here to make you comfortable," Nepos said at last. "If you will tell me what took place between you and the Vestals—perhaps—possibly I might let you go. Here—come in here and tell me."

He pointed to a cell whose door stood open.

"No," said Tros. "I will be silent about that, so waste no thought on it."

"You are a man I like," said Nepos. "There is nothing grander in the whole world than to watch a brave one keeping secrets with the hot iron in his flesh. Are all oaths sacred to you?"

"Any that I make," said Tros, and Nepos, scratching at his chin, kept nodding.

"Very well. Here, take your *tessera* and keep it. Zeuxis shall suffer ignominy; there is no worse sin than violation of *hospitium*. You swear now—if I let you go, you will remain in Rome and come back if I send for you—aye, back to your death if need be!"

"I agree," said Tros. "But what of my men? What of Zeuxis?"

"I will do my best. If I can save your men I will, but they are sorely needed for the games a week from now; there is a shortage of strong barbarians to make a showing against the King of Numidia's black spearmen, and they tell me your men fight with axes, which would immensely please the populace. As for Zeuxis—"

"Is there no law to release my men?" asked Tros.

"Take my advice," said Nepos. "Let the law alone! If you apply to any magistrate he will inform himself as to Pompey's wishes and then condemn them legally on any trumped-up charge. Not having been condemned, if they should go free none could quarrel with it, or with me either."

"Let them go then, now!" said Tros. "I will reward you."

"Not so. I will favor *you*, but I must not forget *myself*. Pompeius Magnus is a power. There is possibly some way of whispering persuasion to him—but don't *you* try or that's the end of you! Pompey is proud; he would resent any offer from you, since this has been his doing. I suppose he bears you private enmity, but that is not my business. I will let you go—on oath, mind, to return if I should send for you—and, if you can, you may approach the Vestals. You will have to do that secretly and very craftily. As for Zeuxis—if that scoundrel isn't crucified within the month for sacrilege against Jupiter hospitalis, then my name isn't Nepos!"

But Tros' wits were working—furiously now that he had gained a respite. He was reassured that no gods ever sleep and, though they think in other terms that men, their wisdom is available to men in an extremity. It would not have given him the slightest satisfaction to see Zeuxis crucified. Revenge on such a rascal was beneath his dignity. But if the man who had betrayed him could be made to undo the disaster at his own expense—

"Whatever Zeuxis did, I hold this *tessera*," said Tros, "and I am bound by oath to treat him as a *hospes* until he or I repudiate the bond in writing before witnesses. And it is I who should accuse him, not you, Nepos. I prefer to give him opportunity to purge his sacrilege."

"Impossible!" said Nepos. "There is no way of condoning that offense. It is against God; it is against Rome; it is against citizenship. Zeuxis—"

"Is my *hospes*," interrupted Tros, "so I implore you to refrain from interfering with him until I have my way first."

"Oh—so you prefer to take it on yourself?" said Nepos. "If you were a Roman that might satisfy the god, but you are not a Roman. Jupiter hospitalis looks to us Romans to uphold his dignity. However, I concede this—if you can find a way of using the vile rascal to release your men, do that and I will give you time before I inform Cato and have him crucified. Meanwhile, no warning him! If he escapes, I will hold you answerable! He who overlooks such sacrileges as that knave has committed is as guilty as if he had done it himself! I will set informers on the watch to make sure Zeuxis does not escape to foreign parts."

"So do," Tros answered. "That will serve me. Let me speak to my men. Can you put them elsewhere? That dungeon they are in stinks like an opened grave."

"I will move them to the upper cells," said Nepos, "if you will guarantee their good behavior."

Tros strode back to the grille, where he was greeted by another chorus of lament.

"SILENCE!" he commanded. "Who shall have patience with faithless fools who run after the first Greek who lies to them? Dogs! I have had to beg a better cell for you; and now I go to buy you from whoever sells such trapped rats! Let me hear of one instance of misbehavior between now and then, and I will leave the lot of you to rot here! Do you understand that? You are to obey this honorable Nepos absolutely until I come, and if he tells me of one disobedience these walls shall be the last your eyes will ever see!"

He turned his back, indignant that he should have to speak so cruelly to decent men, then followed Nepos to the steps, and to the upper iron gate, and daylight—where the stable smell was like the breath of roses after the abominable fetor of the dungeon.

As he walked off, he smiled wanly at the thought of how thoroughly cowed he had left his men, and for a moment he felt guilty of having been too harsh.

CHAPTER XI

TROS FORMS AN ODYSSEYAN PLAN

TROS made his way to Zeuxis' house in no haste, although Orwic was impatient. It was essential to take time to instruct Orwic thoroughly and, by explaining all the details of the situation, to ensure his obedience when the next crisis should appear. As captain of a ship he had accustomed himself to taking full responsibility and he knew the value of instant compliance with sudden commands.

"Romans," he said, "have certain virtues, of which loyalty to certain customs is the greatest. They respect the Vestal Virgins and the law of hospitality. Whoever offends against those ancient institutions puts himself outside the pale and they regard him almost as no longer human. That is why Nepos turned on Zeuxis and befriended us. That is also why Pompey turned so suddenly against me. I have made one mistake after another, Orwic. If I had said nothing to the Vestals about Helene, Pompey very likely would have let my men go; more than likely one of his lieutenants seized them at Zeuxis' suggestion and Pompey knew nothing about it until afterward.

"It is not like Pompey to do such underhanded work. But then the Vestals told him not to interfere with me, and they also asked him to procure Helene's liberty. He jumped to the conclusion, I suppose, that Cæsar, the pontifex maximus, is trying to make use of the Vestals, and when I showed him Cæsar's seal that made him sure of it. No doubt he had already heard of Cæsar's swoop on Gades, which is in Spain, which is Pompey's province. He is beginning to feel nervous about Cæsar. I ought to have known he would resent having the Vestals drawn into politics. He probably made up his mind to have you and me thrown into the arena to teach the Vestals a lesson; then if Cæsar likes to take up the matter Pompey can make a public issue of it and accuse Cæsar of tampering with Rome's most sacred institution. Now do you understand?"

"No, I don't!" said Orwic.

"Very well, then leave it to a man who does! Observe whether we are being followed, and hold your tongue while I think!"

But thought comes wrapped up in obscurity when men are irritated, and whichever way Tros switched his speculation difficulties seemed insuperable. He supposed that Conops would be in the dungeons presently and he would have no means of learning when his ship arrived at Ostia nor any way of warning Sigurdsen to put to sea again and try some other port.

"There is nothing for it," he said finally, "but to try to use Helene's wits and Zeuxis' knavery! I have some money left, and fifty pearls, not counting the big ones I hid on the ship. Let us see what the gods can make of that material!"

"But what of me?" suggested Orwic. "I can out-ride any Roman! Get me a horse and let me find the way to Ostia. I can out-swim any Roman, too! Let me watch for the ship and swim out and warn Sigurdsen."

Tros turned sarcastic:

"You who can speak neither Greek nor Latin! It would be easier for you to find one bug in a dung-hill than Conops in Ostia! And besides, I have need of you here."

The lean, impertinent-eyed eunuch at the gate announced that Zeuxis was away from home.

"Then he will find me here when he returns," said Tros. "Admit me!"

"I have no such orders from my master," said the eunuch.

"Shall he find a dead slave at the gate?" Tros asked, his right hand on his dagger, so the eunuch changed his mood to an obsequious, sly suavity and Tros strode in.

And on the porch Helene greeted him, all laughter. She was dressed in pale blue silk from Alexandria, with roses in her hair and gilded sandals.

"I am washed clean—come and smell me!" she exclaimed. "It took three women three hours to make me know there were no longer any vermin in my hair! Tros—Tros of Samothrace—"

"Have you seen Zeuxis?" he demanded.

"Yes. He went to my house to take inventory and discover how much the public custodians stole—also to turn out the landlord's bailiffs. Zeuxis says it was you who betrayed me to Cato; but he pretends he is sorry to hear that your men are in the *carceres*, and he also pretends to be worried about your fate. He proposes to restore my popularity by getting my Cappadocians entered in the *quadriga* race, but all the Thracian drivers who amount to anything are bought up—and besides, one can't trust them because owners who have backed their chariots to win bribe even an honest man out of his senses."

SHE led into the courtyard by the fountain, where she lay luxuriously on a divan and ordered Zeuxis' slaves about as if she were the mistress of his household. Wine was brought.

"Already some of my friends talk of stabbing Cato in the Forum," she remarked. "They talk too loud, the hot-heads! I am here because I daren't go home for fear they may compromise me in some foolishness. I would rather have to love old Cato than be crucified for listening to plots against him! Drink to me, Tros of Samothrace! Drink to the light in my eyes—I am told it resembles starlight on the Nile!"

Tros gulped wine, coughing to disguise embarrassment, so nervous that he could not even make believe to like her company. Her reputation was no least concern of his, nor yet her morals; it was all one to him whether she should lavish favors on Rome's gallants or woo chastity and join some temple sisterhood. He knew his own strength. But he dreaded feminine intrigue as some men loathe the presence of a cat; it was indefinable but no less an obsession—almost superstition—probably heredity, due to his father's austere striving to prepare himself for the higher Samothracian mysteries.

Helene studied him and laughed.

"Lord Tros," she said, "I like you better than the best in Rome! You challenge me! Are you a Stoic? I will wreck your stoicism! Come, drink to me—and smile a little while you do it—because I will certainly do you a great service. I perceive you are not to be won by being beaten but by being helped to succeed."

"Pearls you shall have," Tros answered, and she nodded, her eyes smoldering.

"Beware of me!" she said. "I am a great gambler and I play fair, but I risk all on a throw and I would wreck Rome for the sake of what my heart is set on—aye, Rome and Alexandria, Cæsar and Pompey—and you and me! Now craftily—here is Zeuxis!"

Naturally, Zeuxis was not taken by surprize; the eunuch at the gate had warned him. He affected to be pleased—ran forward to embrace Tros—let his jaw drop with an exclamation of astoundment when Tros held him off.

"I heard you had been seized. I have rushed here and there endeavoring to find friends who could help you. I—Tros, I—"

Tros drew out the *tessera* and held it under Zeuxis' nose.

"Now—no lies!" he exploded, shaking the Greek by the shoulder. "I can call eight witnesses to prove that your father and my father took the oath of *hospitium*. There is Glaucus the banker for one, and there are doubtless temple priests who will remember it. If you have burned your *tessera* or lost it, that is no affair of mine. The oath holds —father to son, father to son—and you have broken faith. No lies, I said! Don't make the matter worse!"

"You never claimed *hospitium*," said Zeuxis, stammering.

"I had no need. The oath holds whether talked about or not. Two *hospites* have no need to repeat their obligations to each other, more especially when you, whose life my father saved for the oath's sake, received me open-handedly. You said your house was mine. You bade me enter and possess it. Should I then have pinned you, like a lawyer, to the details of your obligation?"

"Tros, what does this mean? I have done you no wrong," Zeuxis stammered, glancing at Helene, and his eyes were shrewdly speculative although fear had blanched his cheeks.

Helene, dangerous for very love of danger and in love with Tros and with intrigue and with amusement, nodded, reassuring him. He jumped to the conclusion she was loyal to himself.

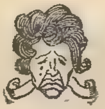
"I have done you no wrong," he repeated, meeting Tros' gaze. "Who has lied to you?"

Conceiving that Helene was his friend, he let his mind slip sidewise like mercury to another possibility, but Tros now understood the man he had to deal with and interpreted the changed look in his eyes.

"Neither poison nor dagger nor any other kind of treachery will help you any longer. You have shot your bolt!" he said. "Nor will it help to have me waylaid and returned into the prison, where my men lie at the risk of plague. Your infamy is known! If I die, that will not absolve you. Mark this—masticate it—let it become all your consciousness and govern you. You have but two alternatives, death or my mercy!"

"You threaten me?" Zeuxis stuttered. Fear had robbed him of his wits at last; he was trembling.

"Aye, Zeuxis! And a threat from me binds me as inescapably as any other promise! You are watched, so you can not escape abroad. The Roman who knows of your crime against Jupiter hospitalis itches to make an example of you, but I begged the chance for you to make amends. I have not yet repudiated my share of the vow, although you broke yours. I will still protect you, if you turn about—now—smartly —and undo your sacrilege by helping me, as you have harmed me hitherto, that is to say, with all your zeal and cunning! I will even lie for you in that event; I will deny that my misfortune was your doing."



ZEUXIS' face changed color. Pride and resentment and fear all fought for the control of him, but fear prevailed—fear and perhaps a grain of gratitude.

"Tros, you are very generous. It is true that I lost the *tessera* and it escaped my mind; but you exaggerate the wrong I did, which was an indiscretion, not deliberate treachery. I took a slave into my confidence, who went and sold your men to Licius Severus, Pompey's master-of-the-horse, and it was too late then for me to—"

"Lie me no more lies!" Tros interrupted. "You intended to divide my pearls with Licius Severus! I will make him party to the sacrilege and have your slave's testimony taken on the rack if there is any doubt in your mind as to my earnestness! I know the law. An offense against *hospitium* is treason against Rome; so your slaves can be tortured against you—and you also! But I blame myself a little, Zeuxis; I should not have tempted you by telling you of all those pearls—which are in a safe place now, where neither you nor any other rogue can get them."

That last argument, like a knife that cuts two ways, instantly converted Zeuxis. Where the fear of punishment alone had undermined his will but left him infinitely capable of treachery, information that the pearls were out of reach removed all motive for infidelity. He wept and kneeling, clasping Tros' knees, begged him for forgiveness.

"Tros—honored *hospes*—I am dying of the shame this day has brought on me! Accept my—"

But Helene knew no sentimental qualms, nor had the slightest patience with them.

"Tros!" she exclaimed, rising. "What have you done with the pearls?"

She poised a wine-cup as if taking aim, and, with the other hand, pointed at Tros' eyes, her own lighted with a glare of passion. She was much more beautiful in that guise than when trying to seduce; all artificiality was stripped off, leaving her nature more naked than her body had been when she fought the gladiator. She was a human cobra—honestly venomous—openly baffled and angry and revengeful.

"Tros!" she said. "Have you deceived me?"

"Aye," he answered. "I have made you think I am a weakling, to be trapped by your eyes!"

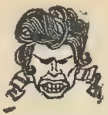
Striding up to her he seized her wrist. She sprang in at him, but he jerked her arm and twisted it behind her back until she bit her lips in agony—then lifted her by arm and leg and threw her sprawling in a corner, where she caught the curtain to break her fall and tore it from its rod.

"Bring me a whip!" he commanded. "Swiftly, Zeuxis! Did you hear me say, a whip? This slave shall learn—"

But there was no need for the whip. The word "slave" whipped her better than the strongest arm could have. She was a slave pretending to be free. No doubt the hold that Cæsar, or more likely Cæsar's secret agent, had over her was just that fact, that she was slave-born. In an instant she could be thrown down from whatever pinnacle she might attain; society protected itself ruthlessly against its victims, and the slave who should be found out taking liberties with freedom could be sure of nothing less than scourging—would be lucky if not crucified—lashed to a gibbet, that is, and mocked by other slaves as death came slowly of thirst and flies and gangrene.

Helene grovelled. She was too much of an artist in emotion to waste blandishments on Tros in that mood, and her slave-birth carried with it, as almost always, the peculiar slave-consciousness that crisis could bring to the surface however deeply it was buried or however artfully concealed. The free man's scorn of slaves was not totally unjustified; tradition of the centuries, heredity and education had instilled into the slave-born a subconsciousness of slavish spirit that mere manumission rarely overcame; so that it was not without inherent justice that the slave set free was still the former master's client and in many ways still bound to him, as well as denied many of the rights pertaining to a free-born citizen. Society had bred the slave and brutalized him, but it understood the problem, and the slave-wars that had nearly ruined Rome had served to unite all free and freed men into one close corporation ready to endure extremities of any kind in preference to imposition by its subject human beings. If discovered, it would not have helped Helene that her owner was of high estate and her abettor in the crime against society; not even Cæsar could have saved her then.

She laid her hands on Tros' feet, abject in submission on the floor in front of him. Her silence was a stronger plea than any words she might have spoken; she was pleading not alone for Tros' silence but for his protection, too, from Zeuxis who had heard the word "slave," understood, and was incapable of not exploiting the discovery unless Tros should prevent.



"GET up!" Tros ordered, and she stood, with all the cobra-venom gone—a piece of merchandize, worth nothing if denounced. Not Pompey, with his power to impose his will on four-fifths of the senate, could have saved her if the truth were known. For the moment she was too submissive to imagine the alternative that she had threatened through the grating of the prætor's cell; she did not feel sufficiently her own to kill herself.

That mood, Tros understood, would not last long. Her elasticity would set her scheming presently. Unless he guided the reaction she would turn more desperately dangerous than ever she had been yet. He supplied the necessary ray of hope:

"I go to Cæsar soon," he said. "I have obtained a lien on Cæsar's influence. Obey me wholly—without flinching—and I will not only give you the pearls I promised, but I will also demand that Cæsar shall manumit you."

"Cæsar doesn't own me," she retorted. "I am only rented to him by Rabirius."

"Good. Cæsar shall instruct Rabirius, who is in fear of an impeachment and will bid high for Cæsar's influence with the judges. Meanwhile—" he turned on Zeuxis

"—silence! Spare that woman as I spare you! As the gods are all about us, I will ruin you if you betray her!" Then he swung around again and faced Helene. "Fail me in one batting of an eyelid and you shall see what happens to the slave caught posing as a free-born woman!"

He begun to pace the floor as if it were his own poop, striding the length of the room and back again, to judge, under lowered eyelids, when he turned the speed and the extent of Zeuxis' and Helene's recovery—intending they should not recover too far before he yoked them, as it were, and set them working. He had handled far too many mutinies at sea to let much time lapse between victory and imposition of a task.

"My men lie rotting in the dungeons," he said suddenly. "My ship makes Ostia, and my man Conops very likely has been picked up by the prætor's men or by some of Pompey's followers. I need help. Where shall I find it?"

"I have influence with Nepos," Zeuxis began, and paused. The smile on Tros' face was sardonic; there was something enigmatic in the way he stood with folded arms. "Nepos might—"

"Let us talk about today, not yesterday!" said Tros, "and of what you will do, not what Nepos might do. What is this about the races and the team of Cappadocians? Are you so situated you can enter that team?"

"Easily," said Zeuxis.

"In Helene's name?"

"Yes, under red or white, but she has no charioteer except the Sicilian who keeps the horses exercised—a freed man—a good trainer, but sure to lose his head when an opponent crowds him to the *spina** and the spectators begin yelling. He would also certainly be bribed to lose the race."

"What if a charioteer is found?" Tros asked.

"Who knows? If I knew the man I would bet on the Cappadocians. Otherwise I would bet just as heavily against them."

"Here is the man," said Tros. He laid a hand on Orwic's shoulder. "This is the best horseman from a land where chariot driving is the measure of a man's worth. I have seen Prince Orwic drive unbroken horses. He has magic in his hands, or in his voice, or else he owns an extra sense akin to seamanship, that sees 'yes' and can make the horses say it when the gods themselves appear to say 'no'! Let him see those Cappadocians, and rig them in a chariot, and feel their helm a time or two. Let him con the course and memorize the landmarks. Then there is utterly no doubt who wins, if those four Cappadocians can run!"

IT TOOK an hour to stir enthusiasm. Zeuxis and Helene were both crushed; he had to coax them back to confidence. Zeuxis could think of a thousand doubts as to the value of the plan, and of its outcome even if successful, and it was all discussed in front of Orwic, who ignorant of Greek or Latin—and they talked both—did not understand one word of it.

"Most charioteers are slaves," said Zeuxis. "Some are freed-men, and the rest are of the type of gladiators—that is to say, regarded with contempt. But your friend Orwic is a prince. What will he say when he learns that the mob, which roars itself hoarse for the winner and heaps flowers on him, nevertheless thinks a charioteer no better than a gladiator—meaner, that is, than itself?"

"Who cares what a mob thinks? No task can lower a man," Tros answered. "It is men who lower their profession. If the Lord Orwic were an upstart or a mere inheritor of titles he might flinch from such a stigma, but I brought no flinchers when I picked my crew! If he had thought whatever he might do for Britain possibly could be beneath his dignity, believe me, he would be in Britain now, not sharing my adventures! Orwic!" he said suddenly, "how long is it since you made sacrifice to any god whatever?"

Orwic rose out of a chair and yawned, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Long enough for all the gods to have forgotten me," he answered.

"Are you willing to make sacrifice?"

"Aye, to your necessity. Some gain might come of that. But you have taught me not to whimper to the gods. I do nothing by halves, Tros. I have come to expect the gods to serve me, not I them."

"They will serve you best clean-shaven," Tros observed, "because the prætor's men are looking for a prince with a mustache! They might prefer the Gaulish costume to the Roman, when the prætor's men are

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**Spina*—the structure down the midst of the arena, at the ends of which the racing chariots had to turn.

looking for a Briton in a Roman tunic! It is easiest to coax the gods by doing what one does best."

"I can hunt, ride, fight and drive a chariot," said Orwic, "nothing else. I am one of those unfortunates born out of time—as useless as a pig's tail. Two or three hundred years ago I might have amounted to something."

"Go and let Zeuxis' barber shave you. We will see what you can do," said Tros. Then to Helene, "Go and give your thanks to Pompey. Overwhelm him with your gratitude for having freed you from the prætor, and beg leave to reward him for his generosity by entering your Cappadocians in his game, to be driven by a Gaulish charioteer named—named—let us see, Ignotus."

CHAPTER XI

IGNOTUS

THE Circus Maximus reechoed to the shouts of charioteers schooling their teams at the turns, and to the hum of the voices of extravagantly well dressed loungers gathered in groups near the gate where the chariots entered, or sprawling on the seats reserved for *equites*, to watch the practise gallops and lay bets or learn the latest rumors about who had bribed which charioteer.

There was a new bay-colored team of Cappadocians yoked to a chariot embossed with Pompey's monogram and driven by a young, athletic looking man in Gaulish costume who drove them at a walk around the course so many times that the observers presently lost interest. Then, suddenly, he launched the team into a frenzied gallop, reining in again before he reached the turn.

"Did you see that? All four on their toes at once—as sudden as a javelin! That man will bear watching!" said a dissolute-faced youngster, leaning on his elbows over the barrier near the box reserved for patrons of the games.

"Better watch Helene," his companion suggested. "That is her team. The charioteer is probably her slave, and she's as crooked as Rabirius, who is said to have adopted her in Alexandria because she knew too much about his goings on! Have you heard the latest? Cato had her arrested, and Pompey interfered! Some say Pompey did it to oblige Rabirius as a desperate effort to keep on friendly terms with Cæsar. And by the way, there's news this morning: Cæsar has invaded Britain. Cæsar's agent is backing Rabirius, whom Cato wants to prosecute for extortion in Alexandria; and now everybody is wondering what concessions Pompey had to make to Cato to get Helene out of his clutches."

"Oh, didn't you hear?" said the other, with the air of a man who always knew the news. "My steward was told by the barber who shaves Cato's secretary, that Pompey had to agree to leave Nepos in charge of the dungeons. There was talk, you know, of one of Pompey's veterans getting that job. They say Julia has sentimental prejudices and wanted a venial rascal in there who would substitute a corpse for any prisoner whom she thought unjustly condemned. But the doctor who physics Lavinia's slaves was told by one of Pompey's doctor's slaves that Julia is dying, so I daresay Pompey didn't think it worth while arguing. Old Cato is a Roman if there ever was one."

"Nonsense! He's a bundle of old-fashioned prejudices, with as much sense as a last year's statue on a dust-heap!" *

"Never mind. He enforces the law. When a criminal has been condemned he dies in the arena. No more slaves as substitutes while Nepos is in charge and Cato shuffles off to the slums to talk with him half the night! I have old-fashioned notions. I rather admire Cato, although I admit, I would not like to entertain him in my house; he would probably arrive barefooted, bring in the lictor with him, and discuss morality. Watch that team now!"

The Cappadocians at last were being sent around the course at full speed, he who drove them displaying none of the histrionics generally practised by charioteers to excite the crowd. He did not shake the reins or shout; he did not fan the horses with his whip; he stood as rigidly erect as possible, allowing for knees bent to absorb motion as the chariot bumped behind the stretched out team; but any judge of speed—and there were scores of them looking on—knew instantly that this was faster than any chariot had moved that morning. There was magic in the driver's hands, that loosed four horses in one spasm, as it were, of concentrated force.

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* It was no unusual thing to make space in the Forum by removing the statues of forgotten politicians. These were either thrown away or re-chiseled to represent a more recent political favorite.

"Who is he? Look at that! Jupiter omnipo—"

There were ten teams practising. Most of the charioteers were taking short spurts at the turns to teach their horses how to cut in when another chariot was forced outward by its own momentum at the curve. As Orwic whirled at top speed around the far end of the *spina* two other charioteers deliberately swung into his path, pretending not to see him!

"Gemini!"

He dodged between them as a hare slips in between the hounds, made time to lash one charioteer across the face with the butt end of his whip and, striking the other's wheel with his own hub, spilled him, hardly seeming to have lost speed, turning to laugh at the man sprawling among struggling horses.

"That's the team I bet on! The man knows his business! Mark you—that was no accident. Those are slow teams turned out purposely to injure him. Some one with a big bet is afraid of him. He shall carry my money."

"Aye—to Hades, if you're such an idiot! If they think he stands a chance of winning—the better he is, the worse for him! If they can't wreck him in the practise gallops he'll be dead before the day comes, or else some one will poison his horses or saw through the chariot axle! When did a man ever win who wasn't so well known that nobody dared to play foul? Probably Helene is in need of money, in which case this exhibition is simply an invitation to bribe her to withdraw the team or else to guarantee to lose the race!"

MEANWHILE, Tros was wasting no time watching Orwic, who, well warned, was living with the horses day and night with two hired Gaulish gladiators to protect him. Though Helene had entered the team under Pompey's name, that was in some ways a disadvantage, because Pompey himself had returned to his villa to be with his ailing wife and had left all arrangements for the coming games in the hands of one of his lieutenants. There were fourteen races to be run before the third day of the games, when butchery of prisoners and combats between gladiators would begin, so Pompey's worried manager was best not approached; if asked to protect Helene's charioteer he would probably have done exactly the opposite, to avoid the risk of losing the friendship among influential *equites*, who would object to losing money through an unknown charioteer's surprize victory. There was as much corruption in the races as in politics, and there was also jealousy from Pompey's own great racing stable to consider.

But Tros had to depend not only on Orwic's victory, but on the acclamations of the crowd. He had to make Orwic popular, while he himself kept out of sight for fear of being recognized by any one who might report him to the prætor. Nepos had refused to intervene with Cato, saying he could not afford to lose the prætor's friendship; more, when Tros had gone to him with fruit and vegetables for his men, he had reminded Tros of his promise to surrender himself on demand.

"I don't care about that Briton. Nothing was said about him, but you and your other men must tread the sand unless orders come from Cato or the senate. You have three more days, so stir yourself! I have told Cato you are in the *carceres*—which is the truth because I hold your promise. Cato says you have been plotting against Rome, besides intriguing with the Vestals, so there is nothing I can do, unless you want yourself run through the thigh. You might appeal then to the Vestals and they might dare to protect you; but if they should look away I would have to order out the masks * and hooks. I would prefer to fight it out if I were you."

So Tros kept Zeuxis and Helene hard at work manipulating Rome's news-avid underworld. They sent their slaves into the city to inform whoever had a ticket for the games that it was safe to bet on Helene's Cappadocians and the charioteer Ignotus. Rumor having spread that Cæsar had already attacked Britain, advantage was taken of that to excite superstition. It was whispered, as a deadly secret—which naturally spread like wild-fire—that Ignotus was a Gaul and had been sent by Cæsar to foreshadow his own success in Britain by winning a victor's laurel in the Circus Maximus.

There were some, a bit wary of omens, who suggested that if the Briton should win that might foretell Cæsar's defeat; but the mob loved Cæsar and his everlasting triumphs over foreigners, whose property poured into Rome, so there were only enough doubters to keep the odds against Helene's Cappadocians comparatively tempting, and the Jews, Greeks and Armenians, who openly conducted lawless betting dens under the eyes of bribed officials, did a thriving business.

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*The men in masks who came out to kill the wounded before other men put hooks under their armpits and dragged them out.

Three of Zeuxis' slaves were sent to Ostia to try to find out what had become of Conops, failing which they were to watch for Tros' ship and send word by runner. But the first message they sent back was to the effect that Conops had vanished as if earth had swallowed him and that there was no sign of the ship, although two triremes, with full crews on board, were anchored near the habor-mouth and seemed to be expecting action.

Tros made one desperate effort to reach the Vestals and appeal for their protection. But Pompey had begun to pave the way for a public protest against the Vestals' alleged intriguing in behalf of Cæsar. Their palace was heavily guarded. Even when the Vestals went to change the watch over the undying flame they walked between two lines of armed men, who turned their backs toward them and faced either way. Tros did not dare to draw attention to himself.

SO HE had to pin his whole faith to the wildest plan ever a desperate man invented! Orwic *must* be the victor in the last *quadriga* race on the third day, when the crowd would already be mad with excitement! Orwic must win money for the crowd as well as foretell Cæsar's coming triumph! That was something that the gods and Orwic must contrive between them. Then, the races over, Orwic must join Tros in the *carceres** and sally forth the next day into the arena, while the crowd still loved him, and so make Tros and his Northmen popular. Whether they should have to fight Numidians or beasts, Orwic must appear to be the leader; Tros himself would simply guard the young man's back and rally the Northmen when they needed it. Then, when the foes were beaten—as they *must* be!—Tros, acting as interpreter for Orwic, would appeal to the spectators—to the Vestals—even to Pompey himself as the patron of the games! The odds were half a million to one against the plan's success—and yet no other plan was possible.

There was nothing to count on but the mob's emotion, absolutely unpredictable, although the Roman mob was usually generous toward prisoners who showed good sport. The Vestals, if the mob were not enthusiastic, might not dare to give the signal to let Tros and his companions go free. Possibly Pompey had conveyed a hint to them. But if they did dare nobody could question the decision afterward—not even Pompey himself.

And meanwhile, not a sign from Conops—not a hint of where the ship might be! She might be wrecked! Or Sigurdsen might have flinched from the risk of putting into Ostia and, turning pirate, might have set forth on a mad cruise of his own! And Cæsar already invading Britain! Probably Cæsar was short of men because of the lack of shipping and the dire necessity to hold Gaul with numberless garrisons all ready for emergency. But even now Caswallon and his Britons might be fighting desperately for their Lunden Town! He could almost hear Fflur saying:

"Tros will come yet. Never doubt him!"

And last, not least, Helene added to the climax of perplexities. When she discovered he had nothing to depend on but the very doubtful generosity of the spectators, she recovered self-possession, and the cobra-venom took a new lease of existence.

"Tros," she said, "Lord Tros, you are no judge of women, but to judge men shrewdly is my one gift. I find you admirable. You can thrill me as no man ever did, and you can make me flinch without a blow, which is a rapturous sensation now I come to think of it. And I adore a man who is so faithful that the very Roman headsman trusts him to return if summoned! Nevertheless, I think you are the least wise man I ever saw!"

"Rot me your opinion!" Tros exploded. "Save your own skin by obedience."

"Lord Tros," she answered, smiling, "I believe I know a better way than all this trusting to your gods and to the crowd. I don't believe in any gods, not having seen them, but I know the Romans; I have seen them sobbing at the death of elephants and howling in the next breath for the death-blow to a brave man, simply for the lust to see a man die! A good gamble is exciting, and the game has most zest when the stakes are highest. But why give too long odds, when there is a better chance, and more to win, in an equally exciting game?"

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*Dungeons.

"What treachery do you brew now?" Tros wondered, staring at her.

"None. Tros, I love you! I would rather die with you in the arena than betray you or see you lose.

"Tros," and there was anger in her eyes now, "do not doubt me. I will gamble with you to the end, and I will do my utmost to prepare the crowd to set you free by acclamation. But remember—if you go free, that will be in part my doing. I will have a claim on you."

"True. I will remember it," said Tros. "Pearls you shall have, and your freedom when I reach Cæsar."

"If you leave Rome, I come too!" she retorted. "Do you think my heart is anything to trifle with? And it is easier to shake off war's scars than—"

She perceived she had not even penetrated through his thoughts of fifty other matters that obsessed him.

"CONOPS," he said, looking absent-minded, "may have fallen foul of drink and women. He is a faithful little rascal, but the wine-shops on the harbor-front of Ostia—"

Helene laughed — abruptly — bitterly. "Tros, do you think I am not worth more to you than any longshore sailor?"

"Deep-sea sailor," he corrected.

She ignored the interruption.

"I have said, I love you. I have never loved until I saw you—never!"

"Tchutt! That reminds me," said Tros, "I must take care of Zeuxis."

"It is I not Zeuxis who will cause the crowd to free you," she retorted. "I am spending all my money. I am even begging the favor of Lucius Petronius—that dog!—if he will use his influence among the *equites*. And do you think I will let you leave me to Petronius? You shall take me with you, or you never shall leave Italy!"

But Tros was thinking of Caswallon and the Trinobantes, probably retreating before Cæsar's doggedly advancing legions. He could almost see Caswallon's kind face and the eyes of Fflur, his wife. Almost he could hear Fflur speak:

"The lord Tros never will desert us. Somehow he will find a way to worry Cæsar's rear. Tros never would forget a friendship. He will come yet."

Slowly the far-away look in his eyes relaxed, and the frown melted, as he threw off that mood, he laid his hand abruptly on Helene's shoulder—not particularly gently, noticing the strength of her young muscles, smiling at the thought that she should waste affection on him.

"Woman," he said, cheerfully, "if you prefer to ruin me, arrange for me to die in the arena! Now I go to Nepos; dignity forbids me to await his summons; and I need to give my men encouragement. But if you love me, as you say, then watch for my man Conops. If he comes contrive to let him reach me. And one other thing—attend to it that Zeuxis sends into the *carceres* those weapons that my men left in bundles in his charge."

"I am yours," she answered. "I will serve you. But remember—I am yours as much as any of your men and you shall not desert me! Tros, I have warned you! Did you hear me? Did you understand?"

TO BE CONTINUED

BLACK MAGIC

by William Westrup

Author of "The Debt," "The Pool of Execution," etc.

THE sun was newly risen, and there was a crispness as of colder climates in the air.

Not that this corner of Africa was unable to produce weather of astonishing coldness in the winter, for it stood well above the tropical coastline of Natal, with the sometimes snow-capped Drakensberg as a background. But in summer—

Sergeant Cooper, in charge of the tiny police post at Marula, stepped out on to the wooden, ant-eaten veranda, and looked anxiously up the track that led to the village. A man well on in years, this sergeant, with a certain trimness about his corpulence that told of an army training. As a matter of fact he was a Londoner, probably deserted from some regiment of the line in the far away past; but for more than twenty years he had served honourably in the Natal police, and only the handicap of a lack of education, combined with an unquenchable thirst, had prevented his climbing higher.

But now he was desperately troubled. In less than six weeks there had been three murders in the district, and Marula was stirred to its depths. In each case the victim had been killed by a blow on the back of the head, and the body had been unmentionably mutilated, the heart and other parts being removed. Sure enough evidence—if any evidence was wanted—that the crimes were the work of a native; and the whites of the district took what comfort they could from this, and from the fact that all of the victims were also natives.

But none the less it was an ominous business, quite apart from its actual tragedy. All of the natives in the reserves round about—and most of the whites for that matter—knew well enough what the murders meant. There was witchcraft afoot, and *muti** of dreadful power was being made somewhere. Generally speaking, the natives were orderly and peace-loving, but they were being worked up into a state of superstitious terror which might lead to anything.

It had happened before, and it could happen again. The native loyalty was unquestionable; but their very simplicity rendered them peculiarly liable to be frightened into a species of hysteria that made them blind to reason, and intensely dangerous. They would be only temporarily maddened, but once the witch-doctors had tricked them into taking the first step on the path of defiance and slaughter, there could be no drawing back. Only too late would they, like children, repent.

Sergeant Cooper swore softly as he gazed up the sun-flecked path. He was not looking for either of the two troopers who composed his ordinary staff, but for one Laughton, who had been sent to the district in its hour of need. Laughton was a cheerful, unimposing South African who could speak most native dialects perfectly, and had a most extraordinary knowledge of native minds, manners and customs. Mainly because of his ability to pass himself off as a Zulu, Basuto or Xosa at will, he had done excellent work in many parts of the country; yet he was quite unspoiled, and strenuously opposed the offer of commissioned rank. He hated the responsibilities of office.

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*Medicine—charms.

Yet Laughton had been with them for over a month, and had apparently accomplished nothing; except to make himself exceedingly popular with Cooper and the two troopers, which was in itself something of an achievement, as at first they had, not unnaturally, resented him.

ROUND a bend in the track came a particularly dirty Basuto native, leading an unmistakable police horse. Sergeant Cooper's usually ruddy face turned a sickly green, and he blundered down from the veranda and ran down the path.

"Where the —— did you get that horse?" he shouted.

The native came on stolidly, and when he reached the sergeant he glanced swiftly about him.

"Perfectly all right, dear old Sergeant," he whispered. "My uniform is under a rock about five miles back. Daylight caught me before I could get there, and it might give rise to comment if a nigger was seen riding my horse."

"Well," said the sergeant, explosively, "I wish you'd left the perishing 'orse with your clothes. Gave me a nasty turn, you did. I thought—"

"Thought I was 'missing'? Not a bit of it. They're not half so likely to catch me as I am to catch them."

"Mean to say you've got on to something?"

"I think so. But not a word now. I don't want any of the native police to spot me like this. I'll slip round to my room—just leave my horse hitched to the rail. I'll yell for the stable boy once I'm out of sight."

He disappeared round the back of the wood-and-iron building, his dirty blanket drawn about him, his least action that of the character he represented. And Sergeant Cooper, his commanding officer, obediently led the horse to the hitching rail, and slipped the reins over the peg. He noticed that the animal had been ridden far and fast.

In half an hour Laughton was in the mess room, consuming excellent eggs and indifferent bacon, and perfectly ready to talk. Mainwaring, one of the regular troopers, was also at the table, immaculately turned out, but with lines on his face that told of physical weariness. Something of a dandy, this Mainwaring, who was popularly supposed to be the younger son of a lord, and was not too well liked in the district because of his distant manners. But for weeks now he had been in the saddle ten or twelve hours a day—often riding through the night—and he had never complained.

"Where's Peters?" Laughton asked.

Peters was the other trooper. A large and unimaginative Dutchman, with a stout heart and very little brain.

"Sleeping," Mainwaring replied. "He did the Eastern foothills patrol yesterday, and that means he probably got in about four this morning. Lord, I've forgotten what a real night's rest means."

"It ain't been too easy for any of us," said the sergeant, informally. "If I wasn't so fat and 'eavy— I don't want to 'urry no man over his grub, Laughton, but if you got anything unofficial to communicate, I don't mind admitting I'm anxious to 'ear it."

Laughton pushed back his chair, filled his pipe, and unceremoniously swung his feet on to the table.

"Restful," he exclaimed. "Have I discovered anything? Well—I've no proof, you understand, but I'll bet a fiver I know who's at the bottom of the whole business."

"That's good enough for me," Sergeant Cooper remarked heartily. "You name the perisher, and I'll rope 'im in without waiting for any more evidence. You got to take a chance now and again."

"But that might spoil the whole show, dear old Sergeant. Let me tell you what I can. In the first place, you have to think along native lines, for of course this is native work. Forget your own brain, and think like a native."

"Or Peters," suggested Mainwaring gently.

"Yes—or Peters. Now if Peters wanted to kill some one, what is the elementary thing he would do to avert suspicion? He would entice his victim as far away from the police post as possible before he did the fell deed. Now let us consider this district in relation to the murders. Here, in the southeast corner, we have Umbwisi's kraal. Two murders have been committed near there. In the flat lands to the southwest you have Helemu's district, and one murder. The northwest you can leave out, because the country is barren and broken, and there is no chief of any standing. Then we come to the northeast. Here is Siltoto's kraal, and a clean bill."

"One time we 'ad a lot of trouble with old Siltoto," said the sergeant meditatively. "On and off it lasted for years. The old rip seems to 'ave turned over a new leaf lately. 'Ad no complaints from that way for months."

"The native mind again—or Peters," Laughton laughed. "If Peters was meditating putting one over on you, dear old Sergeant, how would he behave so as to get you off your guard? Like a lamb! I'm merely explaining why I decided to keep an eye on Siltoto. I daresay you fellows think I'm an awful dud because I have apparently done nothing; but I assure you I have put in some filthy nights and days in the foothills behind Siltoto's kraal, with nothing on except a coat of brown grease paint and a verminous blanket, and no weapon except a pair of shabby but very effective field glasses. It takes time."

"We knew your reputation, and were content to wait," said Mainwaring. "Not for nothing do the natives call you the "Owl." Hoot on, old thing, while the lesser birds lie low."

"Don't rag. It's just that I can speak their language. Any silly ass could have done what I've done, provided he could understand native talk. They give themselves away all the time. And then I've been polishing up my knowledge of native legends and so forth. Old Umbwisi has been very useful. He's a fine old gentleman—one of the old school. You all know the legend about eating the heart of another man?"

"Not me," said the sergeant. "Plain beer drinks and stock thefts is my line, ol' man. I don't begin to understand this *tagati** stuff."

"One reads," Mainwaring put in. "Supposed to make the—er—consumer invincible—isn't it?"

"That's the idea. Well, Umbwisi confirmed an old sort of legend I heard years ago in the Cape. It is to the effect that if you get six human hearts, and sundry other portions of the anatomy of your victims, and mix them up with the proper incantations only known to the most advanced witch-doctors—whoever partakes of the ghastly mixture becomes not only invincible, but cunning beyond all men, and superlatively attractive to women. A typical native legend, but it has been embroidered on hereabouts till its meaning is more sweeping, and it implies dominion over all in the district, white or black."

"Another futile native rising," Mainwaring said tensely. "Interesting in its way, but—the outlying farms, you know, and the women and children."

"Exactly. And the district is ripe for it, simply because the natives are terrified. Nine out of ten of them want to help the whites, want to avert what they can see coming; but they all believe the legend. For miles around not a native dare leave his hut at night for fear of being the next victim; but in spite of themselves they'll be carried away when the moment comes, and the witch-doctor who is at the bottom of the whole ghastly business reveals himself, and gives the call.

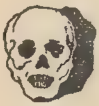
"Years ago—before your time, Sergeant, and before the police began to come down good and heavy on the practise, Siltoto was a witch-doctor of considerable prominence."

Sergeant Cooper swore, and Mainwaring whistled softly.

"Siltoto's son, Rugwana, has been back at the kraal some six months," he remarked casually, "after two years on the gold mines round Johannesburg. He's a drunken brute, but I daresay he picked up some useful wrinkles in the course of his association with civilization."

"But can't we do nothing?" the sergeant demanded. "D' you mean to say we got to sit 'ere till the perisher 'as brought off three more murders?"

"Probably. We have absolutely no proof. If you arrest Siltoto, what is the charge? He's got us stone cold. Of course we can try to checkmate his game by preventing any more murders, but it's a big district, and—"



HE BROKE off abruptly, and they all heard the sound of a horse approaching at full gallop. Sergeant Cooper pushed back his chair, swore violently at nothing, and stepped to the door. The others followed him;

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*Witchcraft.

a sure sign of jangled nerves, and were in time to see the horseman rein in his sweating animal at the veranda steps.

It was young Hall, from a farm away to the southeast, and one glance at his face was enough to tell that he brought bad news.

"They've got Jackson," he announced, jerkily. "Some time last night. They—they carved him up same as the others. Man, but it was horrible! Close to our place, and I nearly fell over him in the grass. Pretty rotten when they start on the whites."

Jackson was a derelict, a sodden wreck who had long since been banned by the district as utterly undesirable. But still he was white.

"Get a fresh horse in the village," Cooper commanded, "and one of us will ride back with you." He looked at Laughton, who shook his head. "Mainwaring is just about beat," he soliloquized, "and I got to get to Red's place. Have to be Peters. He ain't got no nerves worth mentioning, an' he can't find out less than we 'ave already."

He turned to a native orderly, and told him to rouse Peters. In a very little while the big Dutchman was ready, and uncomplainingly went off with young Hall and a native policeman. He was still half asleep, and the news of the murder did not upset him in the least.

The sergeant looked at Mainwaring, hollow-eyed from lack of sleep.

"You turn in and get some sleep," he ordered gruffly. "'Op it immediate. You'll 'ave to fall in again for the north patrol at sundown."

He watched Mainwaring depart, and then faced Laughton.

"Why didn't you want to go with Hall?" he asked. "You ain't tucked up, even though you don't never sleep, an' it seems to me you might 'ave dropped on something."

"I know all I want to know," Laughton replied gravely. "Things have moved with a rush, Sergeant. A white man's heart is held to be equal to at least three native hearts for *muti* purposes, and to-night is the night of the new moon. If I'm right in my theory, the first step in the actual letting loose of the devil will take place tonight, for the time of the new moon is always auspicious. I must be in the hills above Siltoto's kraal before sundown."

"Not alone," the sergeant objected.

"Certainly. Can't you see that if Siltoto has the least suspicion that we're after him, he'll see to it that there is no evidence against him? And then we'll have to begin all over again. None of you could get to Siltoto's, or within three miles, without his spies giving warning. But I can. I've got to play the game tonight, and I must play it alone."

Sergeant Cooper yawned elaborately, in order to disguise his very human anxiety.

"They won't 'arf mess you up if they get you," he remarked, with perfect truth. "I'm too slow and 'eavy. But I don't 'arf like you 'unting alone against a bunch like that."

"I'm not altogether sure I like it myself," Laughton said soberly. "If they get me, all I've done will be wasted. These murders are nothing in themselves, but it's what they signify. I've put Headquarters wise, but they can't send a few troops down unless they have something definite to get up against. And by the time there is something definite it will be too late for the poor devils on the outlying farms."

"I suppose you got to go," the sergeant conceded. "But how 'll I know what 'appens?"

"I'll take one of the station pigeons. Whichever way it goes, I'll get a message to you somehow first thing to-morrow. If they get me—"

"If they do, I'll rip Siltoto's kraal open from end to end. I'll 'andle them niggers without waiting for orders."

Laughton laughed quietly.

"If I don't miss my guess about Rugwana," he said, "you won't have anything to go on. He's clever. If they get me, either my body will never be found, or I shall be lying at the foor of a krantz, over which, of course, I have fallen. Then if you start any rough stuff with Siltoto, Headquarters will be down on you, and politicians will demand your head, and so on."

"That's as may be," the sergeant retorted grimly. "But first I'll have dealt with Siltoto. You won't be unavenged, ol' man. And now you better get some sleep. I'll see you're called sharp at two Pip Emma. That 'll give you time?"

"Easy. I've got a Basuto pony not a mile away. Only get the native police out of the way this afternoon, for I shall have to leave here ready disguised."

"Right. If I wasn't so 'eavy—"

"Don't you worry, dear old Sergeant. I have always played a lone hand. Here goes for by-by."

II

IN A secluded little *kloof* among the foothills, Siltoto and his son Rugwana were foregathered with most of the principal men of the tribe. In dead silence they had watched the pale crescent of the young moon sink in the west, and for more than two hours after that hardly a movement had indicated that anything human waited there in the darkness. Siltoto himself had gone apart a little, and it was the faint noise of his return that finally broke a silence almost terrible in its intensity.

To the eyes of the watchers, accustomed to the darkness, he looked awe-inspiring. He was naked except for a girdle of wild-cat tails, and his wicked eyes shone from a face plastered dead white with clay. Round his withered neck was a necklace of claws and human bones, and on his head the skull of a leopard, cunningly arranged so that the jaws gaped widely, showing the gleaming fangs. From this there hung down a dreadful festoon of hair woven with horrible ornaments, a shrivelled human hand, dried-out fragments of flesh and bones, a mummified toad. In his right hand he held aloft a writhing snake, and in his left the skin bag containing many of the secrets of his magic.

Laughton, watching from a vantage point in the foothills, had seen the men making for the rendezvous just after sundown, and once darkness was fully come, had slipped down to find out what was happening. He had a conviction that the occasion was momentous, and that from the meeting would come the spark to start a conflagration throughout the countryside. In the sheltering darkness he came right up to the little crowd of natives waiting so silently.

Siltoto peered round the tense circle of watchers, and cast the snake from him. From no apparent source a small flame leapt to light on the ground before the old witch-doctor, and burned brightly. Siltoto began to work himself into the frenzy so essential to his trade.

"Is the time ripe? Is the time ripe?" he demanded in a shrill falsetto, and cast some powder from his bag on to the little flame.

It changed to a sickly blue color, and a dense cloud of smoke rose into the air. From the rocks behind and about them came hisses and muffled shrieks, and Laughton, though he knew all about the ventriloquial powers of such as Siltoto, felt a tingling sensation on his scalp.

Evidently some well-understood or rehearsed ritual was being followed, for at intervals, as Siltoto whirled and shrieked around the ever changing flame, all the watchers would stamp heavily on the ground, or take just one step forward toward the foaming man who seemed to be hypnotising them. The hisses and moans from outer darkness grew in volume and intensity, and it seemed as though a cold wind circled about. The whole scene was weird and fantastic, but horribly impressive none the less, and in some occult way dreadfully menacing.

But at last Siltoto finished what was presumably an incantation of sorts, the nerve-shattering noises all around ceased, and the fire died down. Siltoto huddled beside it, utterly spent, and a huge native stepped forward.

"I am the slayer of Mofesh!" he declaimed. "Thus did I strike him as he passed—wow!—and then cut out his heart while he still breathed. Behold!"

He held up a gruesome relic, sun-dried but unmistakable, and went on into other and unrecordable details. When he had finished he handed over his dreadful booty to Siltoto, who put everything into a pot which he fished out of the darkness. Wood was fed to the fire, and the pot placed over it.

Other natives followed with similar stories and relics, even to three who told of the sordid slaying of Jackson, lured to his death by the promise of liquor. Laughton, carefully marking these self-confessed murderers, allowed a little of his habitual vigilance to relax, and did not notice that he was gradually being isolated. Then of a sudden Rugwana, who had hitherto remained unaccountably in the background, stepped into the firelight, and held up his hand.

"All is not well, O Great One," he announced. "There is one here who is not of us, and who knows not the dance of the great killing."

Too late Laughton realized that his lack of knowledge had betrayed him to Rugwana, who had not been absorbed by the proceedings as had the others. He knew that his life was not worth a moment's purchase, but there was no fear in his voice when he spoke.

"It is true I am a stranger," he said, speaking the Sesuto of the mountains. "Four white men of the Government, who have been making silly pictures in the hills—are not they all mad?—saw this light as we came down the pass yonder, and sent me to see, for they are ever inquisitive. Even now they wait my return, but I shall tell them nothing of this foolishness, or doubtless they would wish to make pictures of it, and I am weary."

There was an uneasy silence. By alluding to the white men he stayed their hands; by despising their magic he showed himself a Basuto, for there is an undying feud between the Zulu and Basuto.

"Strange," Rugwana remarked ominously. "Our men are guarding all the mountain tracks, and indeed all the approaches on every side. This man lies, as all Basutos lie."

"He lies!" they shouted, and surged forward.

"Wait!" Rugwana commanded. "How did this dog get here? What seeks he? Is he a spy for the white men? Bring light!"

Laughton knew that his disguise would not stand intimate scrutiny, and he stepped forward, laughing.

"I will answer," he said, speaking now in Zulu. "Listen you dogs—you slayers of unlooking men and unwary women, you foul disgrace to the blood of Tchaka and Cetewayo, for it is I, the Owl who speaks."

There was a stir of consternation, and then tense silence. Rugwana had disappeared into the darkness, and Siltoto was shielded by half-a-dozen men.

"We have known where to look for long," he went on, "but I wanted to know all, lest the innocent should suffer with the guilty. At the Police House tonight it is known that I came here—"

"But who shall know where you go from here?" the voice of Rugwana asked from the darkness. "We know the Owl works by night, but it is dangerous in the mountains. It is easy to fall from the track—very easy."

"The killing starts well, very well," Siltoto said significantly.

"Has this one not said he was a Basuto?" Rugwana went on, taunting. "It is clear he has lied, and therefore he is a spy. But do not hurry, my children. Is not a sudden killing too good for a man who spies? In the days when the Amazulu were men—the days that are now come again—truly he would have died very slowly."

"That'll do," Laughton ordered tersely. "Listen, you men who have sinned through the evil tongue of Siltoto. He and his son I take with me. As to you others, fools and dupes, it may be that mercy will be shown. I have spoken."

There was no movement in the grim circle about him, and from the darkness Rugwana laughed ironically.

Laughton produced a heavy Webley revolver from under his incongruous blanket. Rugwana he could not see, and there were now ten men or more between him and Siltoto. He knew it was the end, but he did not flinch.

"Those two I take with me—now!" he said, and raised the revolver. "Who dares to withstand the police?"

Surprizingly, one huge native stepped forward.

"Not I," he announced briefly. "I killed the woman because she would not look at me, which is as a man should act. But I like not all this devil-talk and foolishness. I have no quarrel with the white man, and you, O Owl, are a man that my heart goes to. My father died as he slew the white men at Isandlwana, and now I die fighting beside one. Thus is the debt paid. It is in truth the white man's justice, O Owl. Come to me Rugwana, you jackal's spawn!"

Contemptuous and unafraid he stood with his back to Laughton's, doomed by his own act, but magnificent. For a few tense moments nobody moved. Then Rugwana barked out a brief order, and they rushed. In the darkness, and with so many against him, Laughton knew that he had no chance; but he laughed as he called out a farewell to the unknown man fighting beside him. Four times he pulled trigger, and was aware of frenzied movement all about. Then everything went black.

III

T SERGEANT COOPER was up at the first streak of daylight, and dressed himself quickly but carefully. Then he went out to the back of the station, where he could keep an eye on the pigeonhouse on the stable roof. Nor had he long to wait, for the sun had not peeped above the horizon when a bird flew in, and he could see there was a scrap of paper fastened round its leg.

There was no trouble in catching the pigeon, and Cooper paled and swore horribly as he read, in Laughton's writing:

> They've got me. Come at once. Hurry.

But after the first gust of anger he became strangely, ominously calm and quiet. Sulwan, head of the native police, almost shrank back as he met the deadly purpose in those steady eyes when the sergeant summoned him.

"There's a foot track to Siltoto's, ain't there?"

"*Yebo, 'Nkos.*"

"'Ow much does it cut off?"

Sulwan explained that it reduced the distance to something under a dozen miles.

"Good. Take the other three boys still 'ere, and go. I give you two hours—not a minute more. Take your assegais and 'kerries, an' every —— arm you've got. Go!"

In two minutes they were on their way, Sulwan, for all that he was fat and fleshy, setting a steady lope that ate up the miles. Sergeant Cooper wrote a brief telegram to Headquarters, reporting Laughton's disappearance, and demanding a troop of police. He left a note for Mainwaring, who was due back at any time from his night patrol, and another one for Peters, who was still at the scene of the Jackson murder. Then he went out and saddled his own horse.

"I'm 'eavy, ol' pal," he said, as he patted the glossy neck, "and I don't suppose I got any 'ands or seat. But you know me, and you got to go like ——."

He did the long twenty miles to Siltoto's kraal in well under the two hours, and reined up his sweating animal before Siltoto's hut. Apparently everything was normal and innocent, the natives going about their usual tasks, and greeting him punctiliously. But Sergeant Cooper was not thinking of appearances, and his revolver was in his right hand as he dismounted.

Siltoto was sunning himself at the door of his hut. By him was his son Rugwana, and they both rose without flurry as the sergeant strode up.

"What 'ave you done with the Owl?" he demanded, without preamble.

Siltoto, who always pretended he knew no English, looked politely inquiring, but Rugwana could not pretend to any such convenient ignorance. He of course knew nothing.

"Now look 'ere," said Cooper, "this ain't no ordinary official visit. There's a troop on the way out, but I'm playing my own 'and first. You tell me where the Owl is, Rugwana, or I'll shoot you and your old fox of a father *now*, and I'll rip your 'ole village wide open."

They saw the sergeant's intense earnestness, but it had no effect. Of course they had seen nothing of the Owl. How should they? He had gone in the night? Well, they and all their men were too frightened to stir from their huts after dark. Runners would be sent out at once to make inquiries, but—

And so on. Polite, concerned, and most anxious to help in every possible way, but utterly without information.

Cooper hesitated. He knew they were lying, but he was alone with something over a hundred watchful natives about him. He could shoot Siltoto and Rugwana, but he knew he would not live five minutes afterwards; and that would not help Laughton.

Then his face cleared, and a grim smile came to his lips. Sulwan, fat, bathed in perspiration, but more than ready for the fray, was trotting into the village, followed by the other three native constables. Little enough, but it meant witnesses. Siltoto could not hope to kill all of them and pretend ignorance afterward.

As the panting natives came up and saluted, Cooper indicated Siltoto and his son.

"Tie 'em up," he snarled.

Sulwan grinned delightedly. It was not often he had a chance to tie up any one of Siltoto's importance.

From the encircling crowd of natives came a warning murmur, and Cooper swung round.

"*Tula!*"* he roared "You can't bluff me, you swine. If one of you speaks out o' your turn, he'll get 'is quick an' lively. I told you this ain't no official visit, when the poor perishing policeman 'as got to wait till 'e's 'arf killed before 'e may draw 'is gun. I'll shoot soon as look at you."

Though they did not understand his words, they caught his meaning easily enough. The murmuring died away.

Cooper handed to Sulwan his riding sjambok of hippo hide.

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* Silence!

"Lay in to Siltoto all you know," he commanded. "You others push the crowd back."

There was a gasp of horror as Sulwan carried out his orders faithfully, for this thrashing of a chief was sacrilege, unbelievable. But the three other native constables were thrusting none too gently with their gleaming assegais, and death was in Sergeant Cooper's eyes. They gave back, sullenly.

Twenty strokes did Siltoto receive, and after each one Cooper asked him where was the Owl. But he steadfastly refused to answer.

Then came Mainwaring. He arrived at a staggering gallop on a spent horse that dropped under him as he entered the village, but he showed no sign of the fatigue that gripped him as he strode forward.

"Came on as soon as I could, Sergeant," he reported. "Sent a boy across to Peters. He can cut across country, and should be here before very long."

His quick glance took in the meaning of the scene before him, and he nodded approvingly.

"Playing 'possum?" he queried. "You'll never make Siltoto speak, Sergeant. He's one of the old school. But I'll bet Rugwana has a yellow streak. May I deal with him?"

He looked round, and picked up an old piece of hoop-iron. With the almost dainty deliberation that characterized all his movements, he proceeded to cut Rugwana across the shins, always a tender point with natives.

"Frightfully wrong and unofficial and all that," he apologized, "but I take it if poor old Laughton is still alive, speed is everything."

But Rugwana would not speak. He screamed, but would tell them nothing. Could not, for to do so would be to sign his own death warrant.

Mainwaring desisted after a time, leaving his victim groaning on the ground. Calmly and dispassionately he regarded the openly hostile crowd about them, and then stepped quickly forward to where a woman stood with a baby in her arms. He snatched the infant from her, and drew back.

"Forlorn hope, Sergeant," he remarked, "but it may work. Probably Rugwana is the guilty bird, so of course he can't speak."

He pinched the indignant baby, so that it yelled in anguish, and then turned to the mother.

"Listen," he commanded, speaking in kitchen Kaffir. "This little one is innocent, but it dies because you will not name the guilty."

The crowd of natives surged forward threateningly, and Sergeant Cooper fired once. The leader went down with a broken leg, and the rest gave back before the wicked assegais of the native police.

"It is a pity," Mainwaring went on, ignoring the interruption, "for this is a fine baby. He will die from the white man's magic, so that the little limbs shrink and wither. A pity, when the mother could save him with a few words. See! Already the arms are shaking, and the little fat legs feel the death that creeps upon them. Ah, he suffers!"

Sorely pinched, the outraged baby screamed and struggled, and the sight was too much for the mother, who thought she saw him dying before her eyes.

"Let him go—my little one!" she screamed. "Truly I will tell all I know, and show you where the Owl is hidden. Only let him go!"

FROM Rugwana there burst a sudden torrent of dreadful threats and curses, so that the woman shrank back. Still with that terrible little smile on his face, Mainwaring brought down his heavy boot on Rugwana's mouth.

"Get something to gag the swine," he ordered. "That woman's nerve will go if he says much more."

So Rugwana was gagged, and even as this was being done Peters rode in, and completed the little force.

Sergeant Cooper, actually shaking now that the strain was over, and because the woman thought that the Owl might still live, greeted him eagerly.

"You 'old the village with the three native police," he ordered Peters. "I'll go along with Mainwaring, and take Sulwan. Maybe we can save old Laughton after all."

Peters, unimaginative and thick-headed, but eminently suited to the job in hand, nodded.

"I'd hold them without help easy," he said. "Man, but you've got them badly scared already. To your huts, dogs!"

Spurring his big horse among them, he thrashed them to their huts, and patrolled the deserted spaces. Rugwana and Siltoto, with the woman who sought to save her son, were led off toward the mountains.

Now, quite recently the kindly government had built a splendid cattle dip at a suitable spot among the foothills, in order that the herds of cattle owned by Siltoto and other petty chiefs might be cleansed of the ticks that carried disease. Toward this the woman led them, telling what she knew very willingly, once she had taken the plunge. All the tribe knew that the Owl had been taken, and had fought. Five men of the tribe had died, and others, badly hurt, were hidden away. Helemu at the last had turned against Siltoto, and, fighting beside the Owl, had died with a laugh. But then Helemu had been across the Big Water, and had learned to obey without question the magic words such as the police used. She was sure they had not killed the Owl then, for it was known that Rugwana's orders were to take him alive, and not touch him with steel. The men had been afraid, but they had obeyed. They had taken the Owl to the dip, and stood him on loose stones so that his head was just above the water. Then Rugwana had ordered them all back to the kraal. But he himself had stayed there, and had only returned at dawn. What he had done she did not know.

"If there's arsenic in that dip—" Cooper choked.

"There isn't," Mainwaring replied. "I was O. C. the dip, you remember. It's only water. I was going to start her up with fitting ceremony next week."

Breathless, they reached the dip, to find everything apparently as it should be. The cover was over the tank, and they hastily thrust aside the iron sheets.

The tank was nearly full, and in the middle Laughton's head was just clear. A filthy gag was in his mouth, and it was evident that his arms were bound behind him; but his eyes showed that his spirit was still unbroken.

The native woman, who realized the true position, flung herself down beside the tank, and slid her arms through Laughton's.

"Let the water go," she cried. "If he moves he sinks, and it may be that he will die after all."

Mainwaring opened the little sluice gate, and the water ran out. They found that Laughton's feet were in a sort of stone cage, so that if he moved the rocks fell' and that was the end. Only by standing on tip-toe could he keep his mouth above the surface. It was devilishly subtle.

HE DID not faint when he was released. His native disguise had been partially washed off, so that he looked extraordinary in his sodden blanket; his teeth were chattering furiously, and he could not stand without assistance. But his eyes, bright as with fever, were fixed on Rugwana; nor could Rugwana avoid that gaze, gloating, deadly and hardly sane.

Sergeant Cooper produced a large flask, and Laughton swallowed half of the contents without taking his lips from the neck. Then he heaved a tremendous sigh, and shook himself as though he was waking from a dream—a hideous, impossible nightmare.

"That's better," he said feverishly. "No, I won't be carried, or anything like that. There's a score to settle. Just get me something dry to wear—native blankets, anything. I'm all right I tell you. I've got to settle with Rugwana."

The sergeant looked at Mainwaring, who shook his head warningly.

"Rub some life into him, Sergeant," he suggested. "I'll buzz off back to the kraal, and loot something for him to wear. Then I think we'd better leave Peters in charge here, while we rush our prisoners back and report."

So, dimly realizing that there was something he could not understand, the sergeant stripped Laughton, and fell to massaging him with skill and fervor.

"I've won out!" Laughton gasped, in the midst of operations. "But I'm cold—cold! There's mountain water in that tank! Listen, Sergeant. Rugwana is mine—mine! Siltoto is mad, and has just been used. The whole plan was Rugwana's. He is just clever enough to be a real menace. Aimed at a rising throughout the district, murders unspeakable and lots of loot; then he was going to round on Siltoto, and win a light sentence for himself by swearing the old boy's life away. He told me! But he's mine now. Tortured me all night, but not a mark on me, you see, that might not have been made by the rocks in the river. I was to be found drowned. He even cleaned my gun while he talked, so that it would seem I had not used it. Clever! Played with me.

Filled the tank so that only by straining on tip-toe could I breathe at all; then, when he saw I was all in, let out some of the water. Hit me all over, spat at me, did—did—my God! did every unspeakable thing he could —I can't tell you."

Sergeant Cooper swore miserably as he strove to bring back life to the numb body, avoiding as far as he could the purple bruises with which it was covered.

"But he's mine now," Laughton resumed. "Tried to break my spirit. My ——, if he only knew how near I was to giving in and screaming! But I've got him now. That's all I ask. On the way back."

"I won't be a party to no funny business," Sergeant Cooper said stiffly. "We got him, and he'll go to trial."

"Trial!" Laughton laughed hysterically. "He's got it all mapped out. He'll get a first rate lawyer, and everything I say will be lies. You know the stuff—sympathizing with me in my unfortunate experience, and quite understanding my resentment. They thought I was a Basuto spying on their religious ceremonies, and put me in the tank as a lesson. Never meant to kill me, or of course they would have done it straight away. In a few weeks, when he comes to trial, all that will sound quite reasonable. Shouldn't wonder if he got off with a caution. You know what some of our judges are like."

Cooper knew only too well. And he had suffered too often at the hands of a clever lawyer to scout the possibility of an acquittal.

"I tell you I won't 'ave no murder done," he insisted.

"Murder? Good ——, do you think it would satisfy me just to shoot the swine, after all he did to me? I haven't told you half—I can't! This is a case of white and black reduced to the elemental. Do you think just shooting him will stop me from going mad? When a man has been through what I've been through, only with his bare hands can he hope to win back his manhood. You see, Sergeant, you see?"

He was shivering with the violence of his craving for action, his unnaturally bright eyes fixed imploringly on Cooper.

"It's 'ard to say," the latter temporised. "I got to consider my duty to the country—"

"The country! Good ——, man, can't you see what will happen if Rugwana lives? Even if he is in gaol, the tribe will stand by him out of sheer terror of his eventual release. The danger will be merely checked, to rise again when we are least prepared. But with Rugwana dead many will come forward to testify the truth, and all will be well. I know the native."

"That's true enough, ol' man. Feelin' a bit better?"

Laughton ignored the question, but caught the sergeant's hand in his.

"I appeal to you as a friend," he said. "The law? A court of justice? What will that do for me? This is man to man, Sergeant. We may both die, but at least I assure you Rugwana will not live. And we take the track back through the foothills."

"All right, ol' man," Sergeant Cooper said heavily. "If anything 'appens to you I'll never forgive myself, but I see what you mean. You got to settle it yourself."

Mainwaring came back with some clothes, and driving before him six natives handcuffed together. He shot a quick glance at Laughton's strained face, and indicated the prisoners.

"A little contribution from Peters," he explained lightly. "He's no fool, that citizen. This represents all that is left of the principal men of the village. Apparently Laughton collared the cream of them last night."

Sergeant Cooper grunted, and helped Laughton into the makeshift clothes. Then he gave his orders.

"We'll go back along the mountain track," he said. "I—I don't want no fuss at any of the kraals down below. Sulwan goes a'ead with them six johnnies, and you, Mainwaring, follow with Siltoto. I'll bring up the rear with Laughton and Rugwana."

Mainwaring shot another glance at Laughton, and the sergeant colored angrily. He always felt that Mainwaring knew more than was good for him.

"Step lively," he commanded. "I don't want to 'ang round 'ere all day."

So they moved off, and Mainwaring displayed no emotion whatever as Cooper dropped ever farther back with Laughton and Rugwana. Till at last, in the very wildest part of the track, with towering buttresses to one side and a precipice but a few scant yards to the other, Laughton suddenly stopped. Sergeant Cooper, his gaze steadfastly ahead, went on till a turn in the path hid him from view, and then pulled up his horse and dismounted.

For perhaps ten minutes he waited, and then Laughton appeared riding the native pony he had borrowed. He reeled drunkenly in the saddle, but the sergeant was quick to see that the madness had gone from his eyes; leaving him deathlike, but at peace.

He pulled in his pony, and saluted as to an officer. His shirt was in shreds, and his knuckles raw and dripping blood. There were ugly scratches on his throat, and a great wale across the side of his head.

"Regret report—prisoner escaped, sir," he mumbled thickly. "Went after him but —he fell over a *krantz*. Must have been—smashed to bits."

The sergeant was just in time to catch him as he fell.

JUST three days later Laughton woke up to take an intelligent interest in things, and found the sergeant sitting by his bed.

"What's the trouble, dear old Sergeant?" he queried.

Sergeant Cooper jumped up, knocked over his chair, and then pulled himself together.

"These —— reports," he replied gruffly. "Thought you was never going to get well enough to 'elp me. Feeling all right?"

"Fine. What's headquarters worrying about?"

As a matter of fact Cooper had hardly spared a thought for headquarters during the past three days, but he was not going to admit he had felt any anxiety about Laughton.

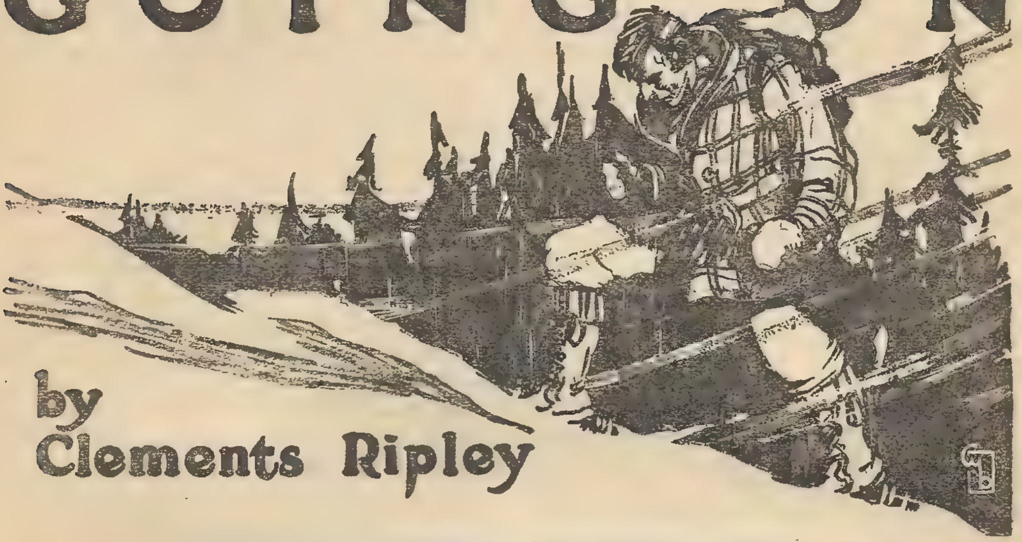
"They—they want to know 'ow the —— you got that pigeon off, when at the time you was standin' up to your neck in water, an' the perishers was 'itting you with knobkerries," he said, with perfect truth. "Some one at headquarters seemed more interested in that point than in the whole amazing business."

Laughton chuckled, despite the picture tactlessly conjured up by the other's words.

"Easy," he answered. "I fixed that message up before I took a hand at all. Had one of those little native wicker cages, you know, which I shoved in a bush with the door open. I knew the bird wouldn't stir till daybreak, and if I wasn't back by that time to shut the door, I knew I should want you mighty badly."

"Well I be 'anged!" said the sergeant, admiringly.

GOING ON



by Clements Ripley

Author of "Pass until Midnight," "No Discretion at All," etc.

"YOU," said Stephen Muir, "will never live to get to White Hope Creek."

There was neither heat nor malice in the speech. It was a plain statement of fact. But the man who sprawled at his feet had never learned to understand Muir's terrible directness. He shrank closer to the frozen earth and stared up at him with sudden apprehension.

"What you mean?" he demanded.

Muir frowned impatiently.

"Oh, I'm not going to kill you, if that's what you're worrying about," he returned. "I just meant that you won't be able to make it.

"Figure it out for yourself," he went on as there was no answer. "We've come three days, and you've given out already. There'll be at least three more, and they'll be worse. You're done."

The other turned it over in his mind.

"Well," he asked weakly, "what about it?"

"I'm going on."

Muir's tone was casual, but the other raised his head and stared as though he had not heard aright.

"Going on? But, say—"

"I'd carry you if I could, but since I can't—"

"But listen!" The man's tone was incredulous. "You don't mean you're goin' to leave me! Why—why I'd die."

Muir nodded.

"I'm afraid so," he said soberly. "But if I stayed we'd both die. So I'll be going—unless you can get up and come along."

"You know I can't get up and come along," the other told him with a burst of feeble irritation. "I've give out. My legs won't hold me up. Think I'm layin' here for fun?"

Muir nodded.

"I know. But—" earnestly—"the trouble isn't with your legs; it's with your will power—guts. You could make them hold you up. I do."

The man on the ground looked blank. What he saw was a pale, insignificant, sandy-haired little man with sharp features, doubly sharpened by hunger and weariness, who swayed weakly and talked nonsense about making his legs hold him up when any fool could see that they were just about to crumple at the knees as he stood there. What he missed were the heavy, driving lines about the thin, straight mouth and a certain flaring of the pinched nostrils, and his tone took on a soothing, persuasive quality that one might use with a madman.

"Sure, I know," he humored him, "but you don't want to crowd things. Now you're pretty near all in yourself. What we want to do is to make camp here and get us something to eat—"

Muir glanced at the pale, wintery sun

above the scrub pines and measured the distance to the top of the ridge.

"I figure on making the top tonight," he said. "There's not more than two hours of daylight left. I've got to be going."

"Aw, now, be reasonable." The tone was still persuasive but there was a catch in the voice. "What's the difference?"

"I figure on making it tonight," said Muir simply, but with the ring of finality. "You see I got to."

The other drew a long breath.

"For God's sake," he burst out helplessly, "What's eatin' you? You're your own boss ain't you?"

Muir did not answer. He had long since realized the hopelessness of trying to make other people understand why, when he had set out to do a thing, he must finish it. That was the way he trained his will power, and his will power was a thing with which he dared not tamper. It was the one thing he really trusted.

But though he said nothing a certain hardening of the lines about his eyes and mouth told the man on the ground that it was useless. His under lip began to quiver weakly.

"I'm starved," he whined. "If you'd give me something to eat now—"

Muir shook his head.

"Got to save grub," he said. "I figure not to open it up 'til I get to the top."

The other caught the "I" and winced, but the chance of food was a straw and he clutched at it.

"A few prunes ain't goin' to make or break us," he urged desperately. "Maybe if I was to eat I could go on."

"You wouldn't get far. Besides, there's only fifty-four, and they've got to last a good three days—maybe more."

"Aw say—like as not we'll meet up with somebody. I'm starving I tell you. Maybe we'll find a cache."

"I don't take chances. You took a chance and went to sleep at the steering oar. If you hadn't let our boat pile up on the rocks we'd be half way to Cook's Inlet now—I'm not blaming you, I'm just telling you."

As he spoke he hitched at his pack-straps preliminary to starting. The man on the ground noted the movement and his eyes bulged with a sudden panic.

"Wait!" he croaked hoarsely. "My God, you aint really goin'?" He squirmed forward with the strength of despair. "You don't mean that. Sure you don't. You're just kiddin'! You do mean it?"

Muir had watched the outburst impassively. Now he inclined his head.

The other drew a long, shuddering breath.

"The grub—"

"No," said Muir quietly.

He paused a moment, while the man eyed him, speechless. Then:

"You see it wouldn't do you any good," he went on; not so much justifying himself as giving the other an explanation to which he had a right. "You'd eat it today, and tomorrow you'd be just as bad off. There's scarcely enough for one, and you're as good as dead now."

He paused again as though waiting for an agreement, while the man on the ground stared up at him, his face working.

"Of course if there was any chance for you—as long as you could travel—"

Into the eyes that stared at him there came a sudden, wild hope.

"Wait!" he begged tensely, his voice hardly more than a whisper. "Wait! I'll try. Gimme a chance. For God's sake—oh, gimme a chance—"

He was on his hands and knees now, weaving weakly from side to side, the corded veins standing out on his forehead. His voice rose to a scream.

"Wait—I can make it—oh, please wait—I'm getting there— Ah!"

Somehow he was on his feet, his knees doubling under him, his hands groping for support. Muir watched him stumble forward a step or two, and then sag down into a helpless heap, racked with dry, convulsive heavings.

"You see," he said.

HE WAITED a moment and then turned and plodded away up the slope.

His conscience troubled him not at all. He was sorry for the man; so sorry, in fact, that if he had for one minute relaxed his careful attitude of frozen impassivity, heaven only knew what absurdity he might have attempted. But he saw clearly that any other thing than the thing he had done would have been an absurdity. The man was done for. To have waited would only have jeopardized his own chances of getting through. The other had been a drag on him for the past forty-eight hours as it was.

Nor did the taking of the food trouble him. As he had said, there was barely enough for one. To have divided it for the sake of a man who was already as good as dead would have been a piece of silly sentiment that would have helped no one. He had no illusions as to the chance of meeting any one or finding a cache. The country he proposed to cross was a wild, unexplored strip and winter was setting in. It might be a year or it might be ten before that particular bit of Southern Alaska saw another human being.

He did not go over these things in his mind as he toiled up the slope. He did not have to. He had worked it all out yesterday, when he had seen clearly that his companion was not going to get through. He had made up his mind what he should do when the time came—and when Stephen Muir made up his mind to do a thing that thing was in a fair way to be done.

It was of a piece with his determination to reach the top of the ridge before he camped for the night. When he had said that he must accomplish it he had spoken no more than the literal truth. Some men carry luck pieces. Others view a new moon over their left shoulder. Stephen Muir believed in his will. It was a fetish with him. To it he offered daily sacrifices, and perhaps the most curious of these was his habit, no matter what he was doing, of setting a mark for himself and reaching it no matter what might happen. Success, he believed, strengthened it; failure would weaken it; and once sapped, he knew how hard it would be to build it up.

In this connection he was a little troubled at the length of time he had spent in arguing with the man he had left. He did not for a moment fool himself with the belief that he had done it out of consideration for his erstwhile partner. He had not intended it, but when the time came the temptation to use the opportunity to snatch a moment's rest from the grinding toil of the past three days had been too much for him. Only he knew how near he had come to crumpling up then and there, and the thought frightened him a little.

The delay had made him late too. He glanced at the sun, already touching the tops of the pines. It might be dark before he reached his goal, and traveling after dark was slow and difficult. Well, so much the worse. If his body had betrayed him, his body must take the punishment. And even as he swayed and stumbled with weariness he took a queer, grim pleasure in the thought.

And so he plodded on, dragging up one foot, planting it ahead of the other, repeating the process, steadily, endlessly. From time to time he gauged his remaining distance against the height of the sun. He knew better than to hurry.

Slowly the shadows lengthened. The pines turned black, and their tops began to look soft and furry. He forced himself to keep the same gait, climbing steadily with long, driving strokes from his loins, setting his foot down flat each time, putting his mind and will into each leg as it took his weight—making it do its work.

The sun sank a little before he reached the top. By the time he stopped the country on either side had taken on a formless gray that deepened as he looked. To the north Kulshan, its outlines changed ever so little since last night's camp, stood out sharply against a pale green sky for a little and then lost itself in the gathering dark.

Muir unslung his pack and spread his blankets. There was no need of a fire, since he had nothing to cook. He held off the almost overmastering weakness that made his head swim until he had them arranged to his satisfaction. Then he dropped on them with a grunt of relief and opened the little canvas sack that held his food.

He poured the contents, fifty-four prunes, on his water-proof pack cover, and counted them. Then, curbing the craving that was tearing at his entrails, he forced his hands to be steady as he divided them into piles of six; six for tonight, six for the morning, six for noon, and so on. That would give him until noon of the third day.

By the third night he should reach White Hope Creek, where there was a settlement. He should reach it, he repeated to himself frowning a little, but after all there was no way to be sure. He did not know the country except in a general way. Something—any one of a hundred things—might happen; and he reflected that three days from now he would be weaker.

He sat there a moment, his brows wrinkled thoughtfully. Then on a sudden resolution he swept them all together again and thrust them into the sack.

"Save them." He said it aloud, and his voice sounded thin in the vast stillness. "Save them. I'll need them worse by-and-by."

MUIR woke some ten minutes before dawn. It was the time he had fixed in his mind for waking, and for years he had so trained himself that he was able to time his sleep to a minute. He wasted no time in yawning or stretching. When Muir woke he was awake all over. He rolled out of his blankets and reached for his boots, which he had hung on two stakes the night before. It took him a moment or so to work them soft in his hands for during the night they had frozen. Then he stamped his feet into them, laced them up and was ready for the day.

He was a little weak as he got to his feet and ravenously hungry, but the heavy, clogging weariness of last night was gone.

He stared out across the valley to the next ridge, a gray wall of rock above timber-line, bleak, desolate, strewn with smashed, splinted boulders and capped with snow. It was higher than the one he stood on, and the slope was steeper. The valley below was a black tangle of fallen trees. From where he stood they looked like a heap of toothpicks, but he knew from experience just how hard they would be to cross. Above them was a strip of green—stunted pines and alpine hemlock, and above that rock and snow.

Unheeding of the clamorings of his stomach he set himself to make a careful study of it. There was a gully that looked promising. He went over it foot by foot, marking its difficulties, planning his route, calculating his time. By noon, he decided, he should be above timber-line. There was a bench which he should reach by four o'clock. At the head of the gully two boulders stood up to form a notch like a rifle sight. That should be his objective for the day.

When he had settled these things, carefully and without haste, he turned to his pack and took out the canvas bag that held his food.

He weighed it in his hand without opening it, flexing his muscles, testing them. The raw hunger was a pain, but it was only a pain. Since he had slept the leaden weakness of yesterday was almost gone.

"I'll do 'til noon," he decided, and put the bag in the side pocket of his mackinaw so that he should not have to open his pack to get at it.

He made up his pack, folding his blankets meticulously, swedging down the corners of the water-proof covering with curious neatness. Somehow there was an inexplicable pleasure in doing these things in spite of the hunger that was tearing at him. It gave him a queer thrill of power to force his hands and brain to their work just as though nothing unusual had occurred.

He put on the straps and started down. It was harder going than he had expected. What had looked like fairly smooth ground from the top proved to be a tangle of salmonberry bushes and he had to break through them by main strength. It was later than he had counted on its being when he reached the creek at the bottom.

He crossed on a fallen log and attacked the tangle of windfalls. That was easier going in sense, although slower. Where he had been able to smash through the underbrush and salmon berries he must stop now every few steps to plan his next advance. It took time, and the sun crept across the sky with relentless precision. He felt a vague irritation as he watched it, as though it, in common with all nature had a personal interest in preventing his reaching his objective on time.

It was well past noon when he reached the belt of timber that he should have had behind him by now. The edge of his hunger had sharpened until the pain of it was exquisite, and his knees were beginning to buckle. He seemed to have two personalities, one crafty, quibbling, arguing that he had set noon as the time to eat, the other inexorable, insisting that he had planned to be above timber-line by noon and that he was not above timber-line. Once his hand went almost furtively towards the pocket of his mackinaw, but before it reached the canvas sack he jerked it back.

The traveling at any rate was easier, for there were neither brush nor windfalls, but a steep, smooth slope, covered with pine needles. His nostrils were filled with their sharp, aromatic odor.

Nothing to do now but put one foot before the other, steadily, interminably, each step a separate effort that moved him forward by a little. One foot before the other—one foot before the other— There was an old rhyme he had heard somewhere that had that for a refrain. One foot before the other, one foot before the other.

The thing sang through his head with maddening persistence—one foot before the other—one foot before the other— What was the rest of it? One foot before the other—one foot before the other—when you come—that was it—when you come to a puddle of water—

He shook his head irritably.

"Puddle" was wrong. Not "puddle"—"pond." That was it; "pond." When you come to a pond of water— Then what? The thing buzzed around his head like a fly, always just about to light, always eluding him.

He brushed his hand across his eyes and glanced at the sun. It must be nearly three o'clock, and he was still in the timber. He'd meant to eat at noon. Six prunes today, six more tonight—that made twelve—and six more in the morning. But he had already saved twelve. Eat six and save twelve—eat six and save twelve—eat six and—

Here, this wouldn't do! Worse than the other. The thing to do now was to get above timber-line so that he could stop and rest and eat. It had been a mistake to wait so long—but since he had gone this far he might as well finish it out and reach the mark he had set.

The timber couldn't last forever, and every slow, plodding step carried him a little farther. He drew a long breath and buckled to it, one foot before the other—one foot before the other—when you come to a pond of water—one foot before the other—

It was like running in a dream—or no; this was the reality, and the other things were a dream, the pleasant things, food and rest and comfort. The only real thing was to go on, one foot before the other—one foot before the other—on and on and on—

He never knew just when it was that he came clear of the knarled hemlock and out on the rocks and the snow. Something struck his face, there was a blinding pain for an instant, and he found himself clinging to a jagged boulder with his feet dangling. He realized that he had slipped and caught himself and struck his head against a rock in doing it. A stone, dislodged by his foot bounded down the slope, leaped into the air, hit a ledge, and burst like a shell. He watched it apathetically.

The ridge where he had camped last night was below him now, and beyond it, as far as eye could reach lay other ridges, a cold, immeasurable sea of them. He glanced up at the gray menace of the rock wall to which he was clinging, and a little, chill, shiver went through him.

"Got to be getting on," he said quickly, and then repeated it in a half whisper. "Got to be getting on."

He went on, but not as he had gone before, for now the slope was steeper and the footing treacherous. Sometimes he had to cross patches of coarse, grainy snow, testing every step and digging his feet in. Sometimes he skirted some great boulder, carefully, painfully, only to find that his way was blocked and he must retrace his steps and toil up the other side. It was like a puzzle, a gigantic maze, in which he stumbled blindly, groping for the outlet. But always he went on, twisting, clambering, up and up.

LATER he hung aloft in a pale sky and watched a tiny figure like an ant crawl slowly across the limitless desolation that was the top of the world. That tiny figure was the body of Stephen Muir, and it crawled because he willed it to crawl. It did not want to crawl. Sometimes it tried to stop, and then he prodded it on again, and that gave him a curiously delightful sense of power.

Once it rebelled, screaming thinly because it wanted to eat six prunes. But it was important, for some vague reason not worth the effort of remembering, that the prunes should be saved, so he took the canvas sack that held them and tied the mouth of it with a sweat-soaked thong. He tied it tight, pulled the ends with hands and teeth, and let the knot freeze. Then he twisted the ends under, cut them off, and threw the knife away. He heard it tinkle on the rocks, fifty feet below and then tinkle again, fainter and farther away, and he laughed. But Stephen Muir's body sobbed piteously as it crawled on among the boulders.

All the time the sun, a pale, cold sun, crawled across a pale cold sky, and that troubled him because he knew that if it should reach the top of the ridge before he did something terrible would happen; he had forgotten just what, but it would be terrible. It meant that he must hurry—hurry, for the sun would not wait. He had argued the matter, calmly at first, then desperately with rage and screams and entreaties.

It went on, and he must hurry—hurry—hurry—hurry. He told himself so in a whisper, for the cold gray ridges stretched behind him and the still, naked boulders towered in front and he dared not speak aloud in the face of that vast, merciless indifference.

"Hurry—hurry—"

Over and over he muttered the word as he flung himself across a snow slope, careless of footholds now, or clambered panting up a rock-face or balanced crazily on a ledge no wider than the palm of his hand.

"Hurry—hurry—hurry—"

TOIL as he would the sun went on, precise, relentless. While he scrambled breathless around the base of a gray, jagged pinnacle it touched the top of the ridge, and even as he held out his arms in a last, babbled appeal it slid over the other side and quietly disappeared.

Then the bottom of the ravine filled with blackness that rose toward him in a dark flood and he went up like an ape, clinging, chattering. The sea of ridges melted into one another. The sharp outlines of the rocks blurred and softened. For a little the snow-patches stood out, misty white, and then they too melted into the darkness. Still he went up. His fingers felt for knobs and crevices. He clung with hands and feet and elbows and knees, climbing—climbing—

Once a slip lost him a dozen feet, and for a hideous instant he shot downward in a shower of small stones, to bring up gasping and retching against a boulder; but the next instant he had forgotten it and was toiling up again. A wind sprang up, chopping and changing. It pounced on him with bared claws that cut like knives while he held his breath and cowered against the rock wall. Then it pretended to forget him and let him crawl on a little, only to spring again, tearing at him while he hid his face and screamed with the pain of it.

He dug his fingers and toes into the crevices of the rock, and clung and writhed and hauled and did it all over again. Each time now that he dragged himself up to a new hold he knew that it was the last time. His hands were numb. His feet and legs were weak as water, and his body was a sodden weight like the body of a dead man. But each time, by putting every ounce of his will into the tortured grip of his wrists and forearms, he managed to do it again. Long, sobbing breaths of the thin, keen air stung his nostrils and made his head ring. Wheels of fire swung and spun and crackled before his eyes.

There came a heart-stopping moment when his torn hands, groping in the darkness above him found nothing, when the wind blew straight into his face and he sensed rather than saw that there was no longer a rock wall in front of him, but a great, black emptiness.

Then the wind hurled itself on him, shrieking, snarling, biting, and the fine, driven ice particles seared him, and he threw back his head and laughed, because he knew that he had come to the top.

With one last, slow effort he drew himself up, got his feet under him and stood upright. Two steps he took, still laughing, before he pitched forward onto the snow.

The beaten wind drew off reluctantly. Its snarl died to a whimper. The moon broke from behind a ragged cloud and flooded all the world with a wan, metallic light. The ridges became a sea of dull silver, slashed and rent with the sullen black of the valleys between. Away to the north the ice fields of Kulshan glittered with cold, sparkling points like frozen flames. And on either hand Stephen Muir saw a blue black pinnacle, and he laughed again, for these were the rocks he had set this morning for an objective and he had come directly between them.

The recollection cleared his brain as a wet sponge wipes a slate. This was the end of his day's march. The thing to do now was to make camp and that soon, for his arms were numb to the shoulder and there was a stiffening of his sodden muscles that warned him of the danger of delay. He gathered himself to rise—

"Wait now, wait! Keep your head!"

There was a moment while his shoulders heaved and his hands clutched the snow. It was pure panic, nothing more, but it made him physically sick. He lay back, gasping, eyes tight shut, while the earth swung and wheeled beneath him.

"Wait now. Easy!"

The sound of his own voice, thin and far away like a telephone, steadied him.

"Get something to eat first and get your strength back," he told himself aloud. "This'll pass off."

He blessed the foresight that had led him to put the canvas sack in his pocket instead of in his pack as he reached for it. Even that was an effort that took all he had. Twice as he tried to draw it out it slipped from his hand. Then he succeeded.

"That guy Grassy Thompkins picked up last fall over on the White Water said something about having a partner didn't he?"

The speaker wrinkled his forehead and stirred the heap of bones with his toe curiously. His companion spat and nodded.

"This'll likely be him." He stooped suddenly and picked up a canvas sack. "Say, look at here."

The other glanced carelessly at the rawhide thong which was held out for his inspection.

"Looks like the guy 'd been tryin' to chew it in two with his teeth," he remarked. "Hm, half full o' prunes, too. I guess he must' been sort of weak-minded."

INDIANS AND PIONEERS

By F. W. Hodge

FROM the custom of artificially flattening the heads of their infants, usually by strapping them to a cradleboard and compressing the forehead until the crown of the head was forced gradually into a kind of peak, the term "Flathead" has been applied to various tribes from early historic times, including the Choctaw, Catawba, and Natchez of the South, especially the Chinook of Columbia river, and the Indians of Vancouver island. Strangely enough, however, the Salish Indians officially designated "Flatheads" by our Indian Bureau did not flatten the head at all, but were so nicknamed because, according to one authority, when they were first met by Canadian *voyageurs* they had some Flathead slaves among them, while others explain that the Indians with undeformed skulls were regarded as flatheaded by the real Flatheads in contradistinction to those whose heads were more or less pointed. In the State of Washington, Salish Indians are commonly called "Siwash" in the mistaken belief that this is their correct tribal name. On the contrary, it is merely our mispelling and mispronunciation of the Canadian French *sauvage*—savage.

HIS name means "chief of men," and it was indeed well earned, for Petalesharo was reputed to be the most intrepid Pawnee warrior of his time. There were many brave Indian warriors of whom we hear little or nothing, and perhaps Petalesharo's reputation also would have been obscured had it not been for a remarkable performance which several contemporary writers mention nearly a century ago.

The Pawnee practised the custom of sacrificing a captive to the Morning Star, and it was on one of these occasions, when the victim, a Comanche girl, bound to a frame ready to be shot full of tiny resinous arrows and then burned, that Petalesharo stepped forward and declared that it was his brother's wish to abolish the practise, and that he presented himself for the purpose of laying down his own life on the spot or of releasing the victim. Whereupon he severed the thongs that bound the girl, bore her swiftly through the crowd to a horse, which he presented to her and, after seeing her safely beyond the reach of immediate pursuit and supplying her with food, he left her to find the way to her tribe, more than four hundred miles away. He then returned to his own village.

Later Petalesharo was a delegate from the Pawnee to Washington, and while there was given a medal by the pupils of a young ladies' seminary, suitably inscribed, in recognition of his daring in behalf of a woman. This very medal was dug up a few years ago from a grave in Nebraska, which presumably contained the bones of the Pawnee hero. The medal is now in a New York museum.

IT IS no longer a nightmare to every traveler, this Day's Journey of the Dead Man, but before the rails were spiked in place in the early 80's, what a terror it was, that eighty-mile stretch which follows the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico between Fra Cristóbal and Cerro Roblado, or the vicinity of what later became Fort Selden. The road meandered along not far from the river, yet it may have been a thousand miles away for all the good that artery was, since its cañoned walls forbade the famished wayfarer from sipping of its brackish water, even when water there chanced to be. Many a time and oft was it easier and more comforting to add one's bones to the bleached trail made by others than to urge the flesh to continue over the burning sand.

The earliest historical reference to the Jornada del Muerto was made by Juan de Oñate, the colonizer of New Mexico, in 1598. Spanish explorers were not wont to complain of hardships; indeed, so accustomed were they to the rigors of overland travel that, whenever mention of suffering was made, we may know that they experienced little short of torture.

An interesting episode occurred on the Jornada during Oñate's journey northward with his colonists. A little dog attached to the expedition came into camp with mud on its "hands and feet," whereupon a party was sent to reconnoiter and found the spring which the animal had scented, much to the delight and comfort of the Spaniards. For many years what doubtless was the same spring was known as the Ojo del Muerto—Dead Man's Spring—and for aught we know it may still bear the same name locally. This water supply was situated in the mountains, five or six miles west of the road, to reach which the traveler was obliged to wind two or three miles down a narrow cañon under exposure to attack by a band of marauders known as *Apaches del Perrillo*, or "Apaches of the Little Dog," as the Mescaleros who frequented the vicinity were called for a long time.

Cerro "Roblado" took its name from Fray Pedro Robledo, a member of the band of thirty new Franciscan missionaries who had been sent to Christianize the Indians of New Mexico in 1629, but the friar succumbed in the desert, as did hundreds afterward, the day before the party reached the *Cerro.*

NO MORE succinct description of the many uses which the Indians made of the buffalo has perhaps ever been written than that which appears in an anonymous letter written in 1541, probably by one of the Franciscan friars who accompanied Coronado's expedition to the Seven Cities of Cibola in New Mexico, and the Province of Quivira in Kansas, in 1540-42. Says the writer in regard to some of the Plains Indians who lived in buffalo-skin teepees:

"The houses were made of the skins of the cows, tanned white, like pavilions or army tents. The maintenance or sustenance of these Indians comes entirely from the cows, because they neither sow nor reap corn. With the skins they clothe and shoe themselves, of the skins they make rope, and also of the wool; from the sinews they make thread, with which they sew their clothing and also their houses; from the bones they make awls; the dung serves them for wood, because there is nothing else in that country; the stomachs serve them for pitchers and vessels from which they drink; they live on the flesh; they sometimes eat it half roasted and warmed over the dung, at other times raw; seizing it with their fingers, they pull it out with one hand and with a flint knife in the other they cut off mouthfuls, and thus swallow it half chewed; they eat the fat raw, without warming it; they drink the blood just as it leaves the cows, and at other times after it has run out, cold and raw; they have no other means of livelihood."

Except for his failure to mention traveling bags, shields, and coffins, this sixteenth-century author left little to the imagination as to the outstanding importance of this most useful of all American animals.

"DON'T know what *pogonip* is?" asked the old prospector. "Well, anybody could tell you don't know much about Nevada! *Pogonip* is as Indian as 'papoose' and 'tomahawk.' It is a strange kind of fog that sometimes comes in the mountain country in winter, and hangs around all day, or maybe for days, so you can't see the sun, because the fog is full of very fine snow all flying around. Cold? Well, the temperature may be well up above zero, but there's so much moisture in the air that you get chilled to the very marrow of your bones. That cold just goes through everything! Furs feel like calico when you get caught in a pogonip! I tell you, the Indians hate them, and the whites don't waste much love on one of those queer fogs either."

OF SCARCELY less importance than *camas* as food, was *kouse,* mentioned as *cous* by Lewis and Clark, the explorers.

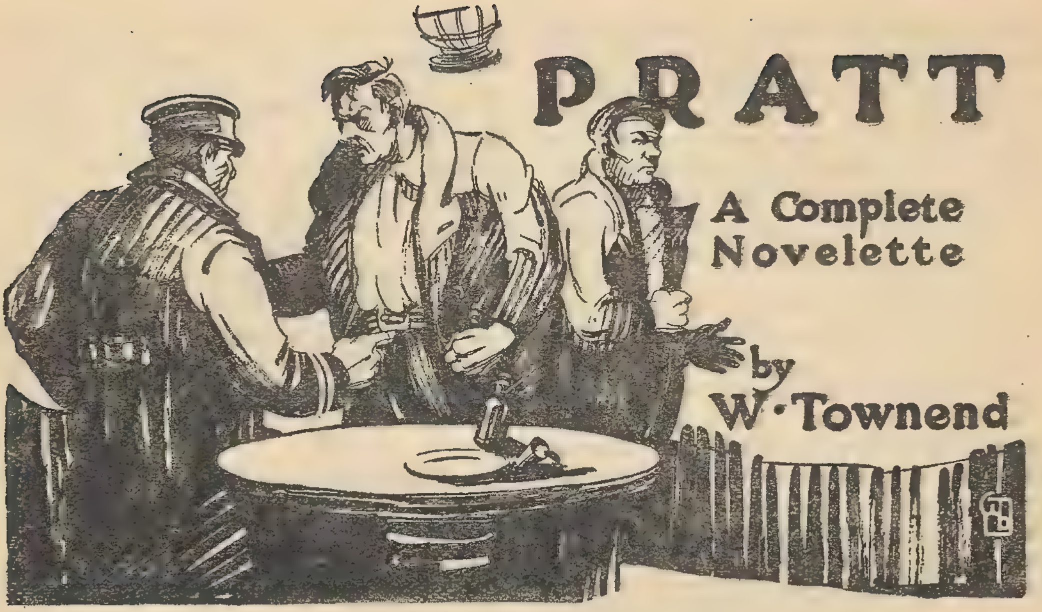
Belonging to the *Lomatium* family, there are a number of plants known as *kouse* that grow in the Northwest in dry rocky soil,the roots of which, corn-like or tuberous, were gathered by the Indian women and eaten either raw or cooked. The common custom was to dig the roots, skin them by scraping, and pound them into meal with mortar and pestle. For immediate use the meal was generally made into a gruel. Usually, however, the meal was moistened with water and patted into bricks or cakes which then were hung on a swinging frame fashioned from flat sticks, and partly baked over a slow fire. For convenience in carrying, these cakes were pierced with one or more holes, strung on a hide thong, and suspended from the saddle. The cakes are of varying sizes, ranging from a quarter of an inch to an inch and a quarter thick, from four inches to a foot wide, and from a foot to three feet long. Eaten fresh, the flavor of *kouse* somewhat resembles that of parsnips, but when dried it tastes more like stale biscuits; in fact it was sometimes called "biscuit root" by early travelers. The cakes were eaten as they were or else broken up in water and boiled into soup. *Kouse* was not only nutritious, but it remained edible a long time and had the great advantage of developing soon enough to be gathered in early spring when vegetal food was exceedingly scarce.

Used commonly by the tribes of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, *kouse* derived its popular name from *kowish* in the Nez Percé and related dialects.

IN THE semi-arid region, especially in Utah, Nevada, and parts of California, the Indians depended very largely on various roots for their subsistence, cultivating little or nothing and ekeing out their precarious existence by means of grasshoppers, larvæ, seeds, and indeed almost anything that a human stomach could digest. When the roots were sufficiently developed to warrant gathering, the women took their baskets, went to the places where the plants abounded, and with a sharpened stick, busied themselves day after day in digging up the more or less succulent roots. These were treated in various ways for immediate use or were stowed away for consumption when otherwise famine would have stared the tribe in the face. The most favored of all the roots or bulbs was *camas*, which was consumed in prodigious quantities throughout the Northwest. It was this root-digging custom that long ago resulted in many Indian bands, especially the Paiute and Paviotso of Nevada and eastern California, and other root-gathering Indians of Idaho, Oregon, and Arizona, to be called "Diggers," a nickname that has clung to them to this day. Among the favorite bulb dug for food by the Indians of Utah was that of the *sego*, which has been adopted by Utah as the state flower.

EAST of the Rio Grande in New Mexico there rise from the shimmering sands the massive stone walls of a Franciscan church built in 1629 in the flourishing pueblo of Tabirá, of the now extinct Piro Indians. The settlement was sacked in 1675 by the Apache, whose depredations for about five years had been more active and perhaps more severe than during any period of their known history. Abandoned from that time, all of Tabirá except its church became a crumbled heap—then it was forgotten.

But still lingering in the minds of the New Mexicans was the tradition of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and his army of treasure-seekers of 1540-42, and of the Seven Cities of Cibola and the Gran Quivira where he hoped to find hoards of wealth, but found nothing. Then the great ruined heap that once had been the happy pueblo of Tabirá, with its towering church walls, was rediscovered, but its history was a sealed book, so the fertile-minded frontiersmen, ever ready to weave a folk-story around the unknown, devised the pretty tale that the ruins could be no other than those of the Gran Quivira of Coronado, and so the name remains to this day, the fact that the real so-called Quivira was found by Coronado in the valley of the Arkansas river in Kansas being no obstacle at all.



PRATT

A Complete Novelette

by W·Townend

Author of "The Tramp," "In the Stokehole," etc.

NO ONE, not a seafaring man, sober and in his right mind, will interfere in a waterfront fight at Genoa, or any other Mediterranean port, unless compelled by circumstance; or for that matter at any seaport anywhere. No possible good can come of entangling oneself in other men's quarrels, but a deal of harm.

Darkness, though lightened by bright arc lamps and dram shop windows, adds to the risk. The liquor sold in waterfront bars, slow poison or quick, according to taste, may change a brawl between two stokehold hands, both drunk, into a riot, a slaughter, ship against ship, nation against nation, even into an affair of state, with big headlines and long columns of print in the newspapers and governments getting jumpy and developing nerves.

The present day sailor of the tramp steamer, deck hand or fireman, may be and is a different man from his forebear, the seaman of the old time wind-jammer, but he fights with the same code of rules, handed down from antiquity as an integral part of his calling: fists, first; feet, if you must; knives for the dagoes, so mind his belt; fight for your own hand, yes; but leave your pal, your shipmate, in the lurch, no! Also, and most important—or what man would be safe—shipboard feuds must be laid aside in the face of the common foe!

Against the good advice of the mate, always inclined to be fussy and old womanish when on shore, the second engineer hurried off in the direction of the men fighting.

"I'll fin' oot if there are ony of oor firemen mixed up in it," he explained. "I winna be lang."

"That Scotsman's crazy!" said the mate. "You take it from me, Mr. Trutton, if fellows weren't so curious about what didn't concern 'em, there'd be less trouble for every one!"

The second mate of the *Ormidale* watched the struggling knot of men under the arc lamp on the other side of the broad street overlooking the harbor until he heard a cry of—

"Come on, *Ormidales!*—" and he started to follow the second engineer.

"Mr. McCall's right," he said, "it's our own crowd!"

The mate ran after him and clutched at his arm.

"Peter," he said, "don't you be foolish! Keep out of it! Let's push on back to the ship. It's late!"

"Just one second, Mr. Ryan."

The mate grumbled but kept pace with him.

"It's not worth it, Pete. I know better than you know yourself. First thing, you'll be right in the thick of it, scrapping yourself. It won't do!"

Mr. McCall, the second engineer, turned his head as they approached.

"It's the *Ormidale* fechtin' anither ship!"

"The *Ganton*," said a long, lean man, "sailing tomorrow for the Black Sea!"

Peter Trutton stood by the second engineer's side.

In the blue white light of the arc lamp the faces of the men fighting showed up grim and angry and flushed against black shadows. He saw men he did not know, strangers, he saw Watson and Richards, two of the *Ormidale's* deck hands, he saw Parker, a small, bullet-headed fireman, and he saw big Curbrook, another deck hand. For a moment, enthralled by the sight of men punching each other fiercely, he did not grasp the full significance of the fight, and then he realized, with a sudden shock, that the four men from the *Ormidale* had seven, if not eight, opponents and were fighting against odds, back to back, the center of a jostling mob.

"Look!" said Mr. McCall. "D'ye see that, Peter?" A hard drive of Curbrook's had caught a man on the point of the chin. "K.O., I think!"

Peter was worried.

"Mac," he said, "how can four men tackle eight and get away with it?"

Curbrook, grinning angrily, was staggered by a blow in the face. He crouched and covered, as though spent. Two men were hitting him, trying to reach his body. Parker, the fireman, hard pressed, shouted—

"Ain't there no one from the *Ormidale* here to help us?"

Peter glanced anxiously around him. Knowing what waterfront fights were, he knew how soon boots would be used as well as fists.

The mate spoke to him:

"Peter, you keep out of it! Whatever you do, don't let yourself get dragged into a scrap like this!"

"I could take care of myself, Mr. Ryan, if I did!"

"It's not for your own sake, I'm talking, and you know it!"

Peter Trutton was annoyed. Because his father happened to be head of the firm that owned the *Ormidale*, was that a reason why he should be put on a different footing from other men?

Rubbish, of course! And not fair on himself, either! He'd gone to sea, to break away from the feeling of being a rich man's son, able to live without having to work, if he wished, with money he hadn't earned to spend as he chose, and yet, wherever he went, afloat or ashore, some one or other was always warning him he mustn't do this or he mustn't do that, because of his father! It was, he reflected, like being a prisoner, out on probation. Unless he behaved, back he would go to jail!

The varying fortunes of the fight occupied his mind. Watson and two of the men from the *Ganton* were on the ground, scuffling and twisting and hitting. Richards, bleeding from the nose and mouth, and Parker, the fireman, were being driven back. Curbrook had fought himself clear of the press and was engaged in a single-handed conflict with a red-headed man of his own size and build.

Peter chuckled. Curbrook's earnest expression, his obvious concentration on the business on hand, his frown, amused him. He could fight. So, too, could the other man, the man with the red hair and the red mustache. Curbrook seemed the cleverer of the two. He had some elementary knowledge, at least, of footwork, his opponent had none. They were, on the whole, well matched. Both hit prodigiously hard. Neither, for a wonder, happened to be drunk.

The bars on the landward side of the street were emptying. The crowd had grown considerably in size. Hoarse voices yelled encouragement.

"Go it, Red! Knock the stuffing out of the beggar!"

For some reason or other, so Peter Trutton judged, Curbrook was unpopular in the port of Genoa.

He called out:

"Use your left, Curbrook! Go for his body, man!"

The mate plucked at his sleeve.

"Come on, Mr. Trutton. Let's get out of it, while there's time."

"Wait!" said Peter. "Not just yet, mister, please!"

A succession of terrific half arm blows in the red-headed man's ribs staggered him. He began hitting wildly, round arm, and then a hard uppercut caught him under the chin and he collapsed.

Watson had crawled away, groaning. Richards and two of the *Ganton's* men had been dragged out of the fight, unconscious. Parker, the bullet-headed fireman, had vanished.

BEFORE Curbrook could step back from the red-headed man sprawling on the stones at his feet two other men from the *Ganton* attacked him. One hit him in the face. The other, a slow, thick set man, he staggered by a drive in the body. A third man, grinning, joined in the assault on him. A fourth grabbed at his neck from behind and tried to strangle him.

And by now his broad face had lost its expression of unconcern. His breath was coming in deep gasps. His shirt was in ribbons. Blood was smeared on his chin and bare chest. His fight had won him the respect of the crowd but he was beaten. Six men were trying to drag him down.

"Aren't there any more of our fellows ashore to-night?" Peter asked. "—— it, it's not fair!"

Again he glanced swiftly from left to right. And then he saw, within arm's length of him, the sallow, frightened face of Pratt, the second steward, a man he disliked and distrusted without, he had always felt, adequate cause.

Apparently Curbrook had seen him, too. The red-headed man, on his feet once more, charged in recklessly. Curbrook swung his fist in his face and shouted:

"Pratt, what the —— are you doing? Come and fight!"

Pratt did not stir. His thin lips twitched into a smile.

Peter elbowed his way toward him.

"Pratt," he said sternly, "go and help Curbrook. D'you hear me?"

Pratt snarled at him.

"It's no business of mine, is it? Go and help him yourself!"

"Pratt," said Peter, "if you don't try and tackle some of those swine scrapping with Curbrook, I'll give you a —— good hiding!"

"Will you!" said Pratt. "I'd like to see you do it!" He raised his arm as though to ward off a blow and backed. "You lemme alone."

Peter, astounded, shot out his arm and grabbed at him. Pratt wriggled free and plunged through the crowd.

"Why not take a hand yourself, mister?" said a man. "You're big enough, ain't yer?"

Peter smiled wryly and turned to watch the progress of the fight. The inevitable end was at hand. The men from the *Ganton* had got Curbrook down at last and had piled on top of him, a struggling, heaving, writhing mass of arms and bodies and legs.

In another instant Curbrook would be laid out, senseless, crippled by heavy iron shod boots or belts with brass buckles.

The red-headed man shouted:

"Lemme get at him, boys! Lemme get at him!"

Peter hesitated no longer. He strode forward and grasping him by his arms hauled. When he had dragged him clear of Curbrook he let go of him. When the red-headed man sprang at him, he promptly knocked him down with a couple of hard punches, right and left, on either jaw, but not before the red-headed man's fists had reached his face.

"Had enough?" he said coldly.

The red-headed man lay on his back staring blankly up at the arc lamp above him.

Without waiting to learn whether there was any fight left in him, Peter turned and dragged a second man away from Curbrook by an arm and a leg, and dropped him, too. A third man he seized by the scruff of his neck.

"Come on out of it!" he growled.

The man hit at him feebly and he smacked him with his open palm on the side of his face and sent him reeling backward, off his balance, into the crowd. And that finished the fight.

Two of the other men from the *Ganton* bolted. The last man Curbrook held fast with one arm flexed about his neck.

"Now I got you!" he growled. "I got you, ain't I?"

"Good man, Curbrook!" said Peter.

The red-headed man was sitting up, his head in his hands.

"You just about killed me!" he said.

"I'd be happy to attend your funeral!" said Peter.

There came a sudden shout:

"Hook it, fellers! The police!"

The greater part of the spectators took to their heels and ran.

Peter heard the mate say—

"Mr. Trutton, if you don't make haste, they'll have you!"

He stooped and helped the red-headed man to his feet.

"Run like billy-oh!" he said.

The man Curbrook had held round the neck took the red-headed man by the arm and hurried him off. Curbrook, with Watson and Parker, the fireman, and Richards, was limping toward the row of bars on the other side of the street.

Peter chuckled, thrust his hands into his pockets, and moved in the direction of the two *caribinieri* in long cloaks and cocked hats who were approaching.

"Now, pay attention, you two!" he said. "It's not right to permit drunken sailors to fight in the streets. Do you understand me? I don't want to be harsh and all that sort of thing, but I've a good mind to report you for gross neglect of duty! All the same, I won't. Not this time!"

That they did not understand a word he said made no difference, he felt, to the force of his rebuke.

They stared at him gravely, almost somberly.

He smiled and produced a cigar case.

"If you will do me the honor, as friends! Your great nation! Exactly! Splendid!" He raised his hat politely. "Good evening, gentlemen, and remember, another time I shall be compelled to take action!"

He left the two *caribinieri* smiling uneasily and strolled leisurely toward the mate and the second engineer who were waiting.

"Well," said Mr. Ryan, "you're a rum un, Peter! What's the game?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Satisfied?"

"I am, Mr. Ryan. I don't know when I've seen a better waterfront scrap than that!"

"Huh!" The second engineer grunted as they walked slowly along the broad street with the tall houses rising up on their right and the harbor on their left, toward the Lantern. "Peter, you'll have a fine eye by tomorra, dae ye ken?"

"I ken!" said Peter. "Honorable wounds m' lad! When I'm an old, old man, Mac, like Mr. Ryan here, I'll show my great grandchildren this eye of mine and tell them how I got it! They'll be proud of me."

"I'd have been proud of you if those two cops had pinched you," said the mate, "and the old man would have been positively delighted! I can imagine it! Who was that you were chewing the rag with in the crowd, eh?"

"When?"

"Before you laid out the man with the red hair!"

"Oh, then! That was comrade Pratt. I told him to help Curbrook. He wouldn't!"

"Dae ye mean the second steward?" said Mr. McCall. "To tell ye the truth, Peter, I dinna blame him! Things didna look ony too healthy in Curbrook's vicinity just aboot then, did they?"

"He's a queer kind of man, that Pratt!" said the mate presently. "Never can quite make him out! Either he's very simple or else—" he broke off.

"Well!" said Peter. "Or else what?"

"Or he's deep! Deep as they make 'em! He's got a sly, hangdog look in his eyes I don't like!"

"He's a coward, anyway," said Peter. "Yellow right through!"

They descended the flight of steps that led to the coal wharves and made their way across railway tracks, past huge mounds of coal and coal wagons, to the breakwater where the *Ormidale* was lying.

The mate and the second engineer began to discuss the fight.

"That man Curbrook's a scrapper!"

"Hard hitter, that's a'!"

"Hard hitter, yes, but he's a bit more than that, mister!"

"Strong, I admit, but slow on his feet!"

Peter stooped to tie up a shoe lace. The others walked on, still arguing.

A FAINT noise from the narrow space between two mounds of coal made him straighten his back suddenly, suspicious of danger. He remembered the stories he had heard of beachcombers hiding on Genoa waterfront, waiting for drunken sailors and said sharply—

"Who's there?"

He peered cautiously into the black shadow. And then all at once he saw in the light of a lamp Pratt's white face and dark, malicious eyes staring at him.

"Pratt," he said, "what are you hiding there for?"

He grasped his wrist and dragged him out from between the mounds of coal on to the railway track.

"You lemme alone, can't you!" said Pratt.

"Looks —— queer to me," said Peter. "What did you think you were doing?"

"Nothing!"

Pratt's face was set in a scowl.

"You leggo my wrist!"

Peter tried another line of attack.

"Pratt, why didn't you help Curbrook when he had that crowd from the *Ganton* fighting him, eh? You're a coward!"

"Why don't you mind your own business?" said Pratt.

And then he seemed to lose all control of himself. He wrenched his wrist free and clenching his fists made as though to hit but didn't. He said:

"You think you know so —— much you can say what you —— like, don't you! You can't! You're —— rich, Mr. Trutton, and that's all! On board ship I'm only the —— second steward, you're second mate! Do you see? I'm no one! You are! You talk big, don't you! You're built that way! But ashore, y'understand, off the ship, I'm as good as you are! I don't believe in getting myself mixed up in waterfront fights. Why should I? Curbrook gets himself into a fight, deliberate; he was asking for trouble, he got it! See! He deserved a licking, he got it! I'm warning you, Mr. Trutton, you leave me alone! You've been making a dead set at me all the voyage, and I won't have it! You can't do as you like, don't you think it! I'm as good as you are, every bit! What's more, Mr. Trutton, I'm warning you now, before I've done with you, you'll be sorry! You let me alone!"

Peter stared at Pratt in amazement. Pratt, whom he had always despised, whom he had regarded as being colorless and inefficient and if anything rather ridiculous, was threatening him. And why? He did not know.

"Have you been drinking, Pratt?" he asked.

"I have not!" said Pratt. "I don't drink!"

"Then there's less excuse for you. You're about the queerest mixture I've ever come across, and that's the truth. You won't help your own crowd, because one of them, you say, deserved a licking, because, too, you don't believe in fighting, yet you stand there as bold as brass and tell me you're going to make me sorry for Lord knows what! Seems to me if you're not drunk you're cracked!" He stopped, then, unable to put into words the thoughts that came to him, he said finally, "Well, I don't understand you. What have I ever done to you, eh?"

Pratt smiled but said nothing.

"Haven't you anything to say?"

"Heaps," said Pratt, "if I choose, but I don't choose!" He uttered a hard laugh. "You'll know sooner or later, anyway!"

And what could a man say to that? Why lower oneself to quarrel with a half-baked lunatic? And, after all, though it didn't make any difference what one's job was or how much or how little one made so long as one did one's best, nevertheless a second mate was a second mate and aboard ship, as Pratt might have put it, a —— sight more important than any —— second steward!

Peter grew angry. He said curtly:

"All right, Pratt, I'm not going to waste any more time on you! I don't like you."

"I don't like you, either!" said Pratt.

"Good! I've no particular desire to be liked by a coward, so we're happy, both of us!"

"I'm not a coward," said Pratt, "you've no right to say so!"

"You are a coward," said Peter, "you've proved it. You were going to hit me just now, weren't you, but you didn't dare! I'm ashamed of you!"

And then the voice of the mate said—

"Mr. Trutton, what on earth are you doing there?"

"Having a little chat with the second steward. Get on back to the ship, Pratt! And make haste! Next thing you know Curbrook will find you and you'll be in a fight whether you want it or not!"

Pratt uttered a little laugh.

"You think I'm a coward—all right, think it! I'll prove I'm not! You've not finished with me yet, Mr. Trutton, I promise!"

He muttered something else under his breath and set out along the railway track toward the rows of steamers moored stern on to the breakwater.

"Talking about that scrap?" asked the second engineer.

"Yes," said Peter. "More or less."

"Did he give any explanation?" said the mate.

"No, none. He's got conscientious objections to fighting, it seems, just as he's got conscientious objections to any —— thing he doesn't want to do, work included."

"He looked —— ugly just now," said the mate. "Been doing anything to him, Peter, to make him sore?"

"Nothing at all," said Peter.

The *Ormidale* finished discharging at Genoa and sailed for the Black Sea to load grain for the Bristol Channel.

Never at the best of times robust in appearance Pratt, the second steward, drooped. The general opinion on board was that he was a coward and that no one should have anything to do with a man who ran away rather than fight to help shipmates in trouble.

Peter Trutton kept what Pratt had said a secret. In the retrospect his threats were merely stupid. Nevertheless there was something about the man that puzzled him.

At times Pratt's manner, though outwardly servile and respectful, bordered on insolence: his smile, as he waited at table in the mess room, seemed to convey a hidden menace, a suggestion of evil, of mockery. And so Peter came to the conclusion that whereas, on the surface, Pratt was merely a sullen, stupid young man of a class that was neither interesting nor amusing, nevertheless as compared with men infinitely his superior, the chief engineer, for instance, or the old man, or the mate, even, he was deep, complex in character, difficult to understand and therefore, perhaps, dangerous.

Watching Pratt closely he decided that he was weak mentally. Was the clue to his anger, his emotion, at Genoa, to be found in his envy of what he might consider another man's fortune in being a rich man's son? Possibly! Why not? From his own experience since he had first gone to sea, an apprentice, Peter could recall instance after instance when his father's money had been, as it were, flung in his face and he had been made to feel an outcast because, ship or no ship, job or no job, he at least—so he had been told—would never starve! And this, though as he had always said, his father's money meant nothing to him and that without his job he would be like any other sailor on the rocks as soon as his savings were spent.

But no one had ever before threatened him because he was, presumably, well off! He wasn't. What second mate of a tramp steamer, especially one owned by his father, was?

On the third day of the voyage Peter gained a further insight into the workings of Pratt's mind.

At five minutes past four, having finished writing up his entries for the afternoon watch in the scrap log, he left the chart room and descended the ladder to the bridge deck where he saw Curbrook and spoke to him.

"Curbrook!"

"Sir."

The man's hard, mahogany hued face was still scarred: both his eyes were blacked and his lips cut and swollen.

"Getting over that scrap of yours?"

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir."

"Whatever made you want to take on a crowd like that for, eh?"

Curbrook grinned.

"I had a bit of an argument with that red-headed feller, sir. Other chaps chipped in and it become what you might call a free-for-all. I'd have been laid out for good if you hadn't come up and hauled them off me, and that's a fact! I'm much obliged, sir."

"That's nothing," said Peter. "Bit of a swine that red-head, eh?"

"He ain't too bad when you get to know him, sir. We fixed up to see each other at Sulina if the *Ganton's* there which she probably will be! Red's an angel compared with that Pratt, anyhow! One o' these days I'll have to tell that young man what I think of him!"

"I wouldn't take any notice of Pratt, Curbrook. He isn't worth troubling about. I spoke to him pretty straight for letting you down that time. The only result seems to be he doesn't approve of me any more!"

Peter chuckled but the big deck hand looked grave.

"As a result of what, sir?"

"Of the things I said to him, of course. I called him a coward!"

"Well, he is. But I wouldn't say that had anything to do with him not approving of you, sir. From one or two things he let slip one night before we reached Genoa, when I was look-out and he'd come up on to the focsle head for a breath of fresh air, like, and putting two and two together, I'd say he'd no use for you even then, sir."

"How do you make that out, eh, Curbrook?"

"He said you was rich, sir, and he was poor, and things wouldn't be like that always. I took it, he was one of them reds you hear of. We got one in the focsle now sir—that fireman, Parker—he's a red, sir, so he ses, as long as he's sober, but when he's drunk, sir, why he's almost human. A good scrapper, anyway, but no science."

And then Curbrook grinned and slouched heavily off for'ard toward the forecastle.

Peter went to his own room. The problem of Pratt was becoming almost entertaining. Though why, he reflected, he should concern himself with any one quite so insignificant and futile passed all understanding. That a rather stupid young man should develop into a menace to his safety and peace of mind seemed, in cold blood, incredible. He thought for a long while and as usual came to no conclusion, save that he was wasting a vast amount of time over matters of no importance.

IT WAS getting on for five o'clock when he met the second engineer outside the starboard engine room alley way. He greeted him cheerily—

"Hullo, Mac, how's everything to-day?"

"Fine!"

"Why aren't you down below making the wheels go round, eh?"

"Jist come up fur ma tea an' hash! What's new these days, Peter?"

"Nothing."

The second engineer nodded.

"Had ony mair converse wi' thon?"

Peter looked in the direction indicated by the second engineer's nod and saw Pratt walking quickly toward the saloon deck house, carrying a tray covered with a napkin and at once he was serious.

"Talking about Pratt," he said, "you remember that night at Genoa when I ran into him by that pile of coal, hiding, don't you! Well, I never told you, Mac, but after I'd called him a coward for not helping Curbrook and the rest of them he pretty —— near went off his rocker and kind of threatened me!"

"Ye dinna say! What way did he threaten ye, Peter?"

"He said I'd been making a dead set at him all the voyage and I couldn't do as I liked: he said, too, he was warning me that before he'd done with me I'd be sorry! What do you make of that, eh, Mac?"

The second engineer clucked his tongue.

"A-weel! an' a' through speaking a few hame truths, eh! Was there onything else he said?"

"No, but listen, Mac: Just now Curbrook told me that before we'd even reached Genoa this merchant, Pratt, let slip something about me being rich and him poor and things weren't going to be like that always and he'd no use for me and so on!"

"Ha'e ye ever met the fella before, Peter?"

"Never. Shows what kind of lunatics you're liable to meet at sea, doesn't it?"

"What have you been doing to him, then?"

"Nothing. Except call him a coward. Silly kind of business, isn't it?"

"I'm no' sae sure," said the second engineer. "Ye ken, Peter, gaun to sea plays queer tricks wi' a fella's mind sometimes. I mind three voyages syne we were gaun oot East an' we had Chinks in the stokehold. One o' them got it into his heid the fourth engineer wasna gi'in' him a square deal. He said he wud stick a knife into him. The fourth lauched an' kickit him oot the engine room. He tellt the chief in the mess room that efternune. Quite a joke it was. But the auld chief, MacKenzie—I dinna think ye've met him—MacKenzie didna see it. That nicht on the eight to twelve watch he wudna let the fourth gang into the stokehold. He tuk me wi' him instead. The Chink wasna lukin' efter his fires. He was sitting on one of the valve chests, wi' his arms foldit, waiting to be chokit off. He didna expect to see me an' the chief. We grabbit him an' searched him an' I'll be —— we didna fin' a knife slippit into the back o' his belt, aboot a fut lang, very thin an' flexible, like a girl's stay stiffener, an' as sharp as an auld fashioned razor. Unnerstaun' what I mean: the second steward's a saft lukin' kind o' fella, but I wudna rin ony risks!"

"Suppose the fool really has got it in for me, suppose he does hate me, what's the trouble?"

The second engineer smiled.

"Peter, I dinna want to frichten ye, but do ye mind your salt water cure for seasickness the second day oot?"

"But good lord!" Peter laughed. "You don't mean to say any man is going to lay up things like that against one, do you? That's absurd!"

There flashed into Peter's mind the memory of a sunlit morning, November but warm. Two bells had just struck and the third mate, his breakfast eaten, had climbed the bridge ladder and relieved him.

He stood on the bridge deck and lit his pipe. The sky overhead was blue, a westerly breeze was blowing, the ship was rolling.

The second steward, Pratt, white-faced, black-haired, thin, in white jacket and dark trousers, had emerged suddenly from the saloon alley way and staggered to the rail. Briggs, the steward, had called to him from the alley way:

"Get it over, Pratt, for Heaven's sake! There's work to be done!"

Peter remembered with a smile how he had gone to the galley and filled a bucket overside and had come back to where Pratt was sprawling over the rail with a mug of salt water.

"Are you feeling bad?" he had asked.

"Awful!" Pratt had said.

"Drink this then!"

Pratt had shaken his head.

"What is it?" he said.

"The best remedy in the world for seasickness!"

Pratt had stretched out a trembling hand for the mug.

"No, I'll give it you myself!"

He had, too, in front of a group of spectators that included the mate, the steward, the boatswain, Curbrook, the cook, the assistant cook, the wireless operator, and farther off, the chief engineer and the mess room lad.

Peter chuckled. The absurdity of the scene came back vividly.

"Open your mouth!" he had said. Pratt had obeyed. He had grabbed him firmly but gently by the back of his neck, put the brim of the mug against his lower teeth and poured slowly.

Pratt had squirmed and tried to screech, but a third of the salt water, at least, was swallowed.

The effect had been instantaneous.

Pratt had rushed to the rail, shuddering in the throes of seasickness.

The mate had said:

"I only know one thing better than salt water, Mr. Trutton, and that's what we used to prescribe in the old windjammer days, a piece of salt pork tied to a piece of string."

The words must have carried, for once more Pratt collapsed, retching and heaving. Nevertheless, the cure was complete. Pratt had never suffered from seasickness again, though for the next four days the weather had been bad.

"Weel!" said the second engineer. "Think there's onything in it?"

"No," said Peter. "It's what I said it was, absurd!"

"Nothing's absurd aboard ship. Listen, there's the bell. I've got to gang, or the fourth wull jist aboot ha'e ma bluid, keepin' him doon below! You watch Pratt, m'son, that's my advice, you take it!"

The second engineer disappeared into the engine room alley way. Peter turned and walked in the direction of the saloon deck house.

TEN minutes later in the mess room when the captain and the mate were deep in some abstruse and uninteresting discussion he happened to glance up from his plate toward the door. It was, he felt, as if some irresistible force compelled him. Pratt who was waiting at table, and as usual stood in the alley way just outside the mess room door, was scowling at him.

Peter went on with his meal as though nothing had happened, but he knew in that brief instant when their glances had met that Pratt hated him. There had been in his dark, deep-set eyes a look of such malevolence that he was staggered.

When the captain and the mate and the wireless operator had left the mess room and Pratt was clearing the table, he said—

"Pratt, just a minute!"

"Sir!"

"I've never seen you before you came on board, have I?"

"Not to my knowledge." Pratt turned and looked straight at him. "And what difference would it have made to you, if you had?"

"None."

"What did you ask for, then?"

This, of course, was sheer insolence. The man was crazy! Must be!

"Listen to me, Pratt, for some reason or other you appear to have taken a dislike to me." Pratt's lips curled into a smile. "I don't understand, and I don't very much care, but there's this that I'd like you to bear in mind: If you're nursing any —— silly enmity because of that mug of sea water, forget it! I don't know how many voyages you've made or how long you've been going to sea, or anything else about you, but you've got a lot to learn about how to behave on board ship. Do you get me?"

"I do get you!" said Pratt. Two faint patches of pink showed in his thin cheeks. His hands were shaking. "D—do you think I care, mister, what you say? Aboard ship, same as I told you at Genoa, I'm second steward, you're second mate; ashore there's no difference between us. We won't be aboard ship always!"

"What are you driving at now?" said Peter.

"You'll know soon enough when the time

comes," said Pratt. "You can't do as you like with me, mister, even if you are the —— second mate!"

"You've a good opinion of yourself, haven't you?" said Peter. "It's a pity you haven't the guts to live up to it! I tell you, Pratt, a man who's too big a coward to help his pals when they need his help had better not talk too much or have too high a—what-do-you-call-it?—too high a standard. He'll find some day that somebody's called his bluff and he'll have the —— of a job explaining what's wrong! Do you understand? And another thing, don't use bad language to me, Pratt, or you'll get into trouble!" He saw the steward's amazed face in the dark alley way. "Bright specimen you've got for an assistant, Briggs, I must say."

He had scored, of course; he couldn't help it! A pretty poor kind of business, though, to score off a man like Pratt! And suddenly he was ashamed. He ought to have had more self-control.

Briggs, though, was on his side. Briggs approved. Briggs was furious with the second steward.

"Pratt," he said, "if you talk in that tone of voice to Mr. Trutton I'll make you sorry you didn't stop ashore where you belong! You can't do as you like aboard ship, and don't you forget it, neither!"

"Leave him alone, Briggs," Peter said. "He's quite harmless!"

And that, apparently, offended Pratt more than anything he had yet said.

"Harmless, am I!" he said. "You see if I'm harmless!" He laughed.

"He's cracked!" said Briggs. "I knew it!"

That night at a few minutes before midnight Peter stood at the door of the port side saloon alley way and peered out into the night. It was pitch dark and the wind had risen since sunset and the ship was rolling.

He was about to step over the sill on to the deck when he heard heavy footsteps approaching. He hesitated.

A gruff voice, Curbrook's said:

"Who the ——'s that?"

For a moment Peter imagined that the deck hand was addressing him, he was about to speak when another voice, Pratt's, answered—

"Me!"

"Oh, it's you, is it? What's your game?"

Peter left the alley way and balancing himself to the roll of the vessel made for the lower bridge ladder. By the light of his torch he saw the faces of Curbrook and Pratt. Curbrook, square-jawed, grim, perplexed; Pratt, thin and pale and, it seemed, cringing.

"What's the matter, Curbrook?"

"Dunno, sir; I found Pratt hanging round, like he was waiting for some one!"

"I wasn't," said Pratt. "I wanted some fresh air, that's all!"

"He's always wanting fresh air," said Curbrook.

"Why couldn't you get it where your own room is, then?" said Peter sharply. "What are you up to?"

And again he realized that, instinctively, without intention, he was adopting a harsher manner toward Pratt than he would have adopted toward any one else on board. It was as though Pratt aroused in him feelings of the most intense dislike from which there was no relief save in anger.

"I wasn't doing any harm," Pratt said. "There's no rule I shouldn't be here, is there? Is this part of the ship reserved?"

The circle of light shone steadily on his face. Though he sneered and uttered one of his short, harsh laughs that was supposed, presumably, to show how much at his ease he felt, he could not hide the uneasiness in his dark eyes.

"What have I done what's wrong?" he said. "Tell me that, if you can! But you can't, I know."

"Speak civil!" said Curbrook roughly.

Eight bells rang out from the bridge above them.

Clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang!

Peter said:

"H'm! I've got to go. Pratt, there's something —— wrong, I know, but I can't say what. If there wasn't something wrong, you wouldn't be scared. You are scared, I can see by your look. The fact is, just as I told you, you're yellow and I don't trust you!" He switched off the light. "Let him go, Curbrook. Pratt, clear off to your room and don't let me find you skulking around here this time of night!"

He began to climb the ladder that led to the bridge. He did not know why exactly—he had, he felt, no real grounds for suspicion—but there seemed to be some subtle, sinister connection between Pratt hiding among the piles of coal at Genoa and Pratt waiting in the darkness at the foot of the lower bridge ladder at midnight.

But the man was a coward! No good! Why let the activities of a feeble-witted idiot like Pratt get the better of one's sense of humor? Why worry, in fact? Whether he had some grievance or not made no difference. What possible harm need one fear from a man afraid of risking his own skin?

THE weather was warm all the way past Chanak, through the Dardanelles and Sea of Marmora. At Constantinople where the *Ormidale* bunkered, there was a sudden drop in the temperature. The sun was obscured by dark storm clouds. A cold wind sprang up. The glass began to fall rapidly.

By the time Chanak was astern and the course set, a north-east gale was blowing.

At midnight, when Peter relieved the third mate on the bridge, the ship, head on, the engines half speed, was laboring heavily. It was bitterly cold and snowing.

"Pretty dirty night," said the third. "Don't you envy me going to turn in?"

"Wouldn't you rather be up here in the nice fresh air, mister?"

"Of course I would," said the third. "But you see, Peter, if I don't get my beauty sleep, my complexion suffers."

He gave the course, chuckled and ran down the ladder.

At two bells the captain who had been peering over the dodger into the gloom turned and said—

"Ever seen a bad blow in the Black Sea, mister?"

"No, sir, not yet!"

"Well, you're going to see one —— soon!"

"I've seen all I want, sir, on the Western Ocean," said Peter.

"Black Sea's not like that. Not so bad. Short and sharp. Like —— while it lasts, though, all the same!"

He growled and grumbled to himself. The noise of the wind made it difficult to hear what he said.

The four hours passed slowly. The force of the wind increased. Snow fell in fierce squalls. It grew colder. Spray that was half ice cut the cheeks. Great seas came thundering over the forecastle head and swept aft to the saloon bulkhead and the lower bridge. The *Ormidale*, light, high out of the water, was steering badly, and threatened time and again to fall off before the force of the wind and sea.

The captain who was on the bridge all through the middle watch spoke only twice after two bells.

At four bells he said—

"We only want the hatches adrift to be happy!"

At one bell he said—

"And it's going to be worse still!"

As a judge of the weather, the old man, Peter reflected, was apt to be right. And so when he went to his room after having been relieved by the mate he turned in as he was without undressing, to be ready in case he was needed.

He lay awake, listening to the creaking and groaning of the ship, the thud of heavy seas on deck, and after a while dropped into an uneasy slumber. He woke, suddenly, a terrific crash, like thunder, echoing in his ears.

The *Ormidale* was no longer pitching but rolling heavily. He dropped over the side of his bunk board into a foot of water, was flung to starboard against the door, back to port against the bunk board. The electric lights were burning a dull glimmer, the port was visible as a pale gray disc in the darkness. He put on his boots, grabbed his oilskins and sou'wester and emerged from his room.

The third mate, already dressed, followed him along the port side alley way.

Peter pushed open the door that led out on to the bridge deck.

Dawn was breaking and it was possible to make out in the gloom the wild outline of the seas that towered above the vessel.

The mate came running past from the bridge ladder. He checked himself and called:

"Come on, Mr. Trutton, ——'s loose! Starboard boats carried away, ventilators, everything!"

"What's wrong, Mr. Ryan?" Peter stepped out of the alley way over the sill on to the sliding, flooded deck.

"Dunno," said the mate. "Broached to. Let's get aft and see!"

On the No. 3 hatch was the starboard life boat stove in, its timbers smashed, with a tangle of boat falls.

The boatswain arrived at a run.

"Well, bose!" said the mate. "What have you found?"

"Steering gear carried away, sir. There's a link smashed in the starboard chain!"

"Hang on!" Peter shouted.

The ship rolled to starboard. A huge sea swept over the rails between the saloon deck house and the fiddley. The three mates and boatswain clung to the life lines rigged hastily the night before. The life boat was pounded to match wood against the winch.

"Come on, now!" said the mate. "No time to waste!"

Deck hands and firemen from the forecastle, vague shapes in the half light, staggered toward them through water draining off the bridge deck.

"What's up?"

"——! look at that boat!"

"Get aft with you, m' sons! There's work ahead!"

Firemen appeared at the door of the fiddley.

A man clawed at Peter's arm.

"Mister, what's happening? Thought we was going to roll slap over!"

The second engineer's voice was audible shouting up the fiddley gratings from the stokehole—

"Come on doon here, ye —— swine!"

"Get out o' here, you!" said Peter. "Go back to your job! Want a clip over the ear, or what?"

The indignation in the man's look made him smile.

He ran aft at the heels of the mate, down the ladder at the break of the bridge deck, and waded waist deep through the flooded well deck to where the huge fifty feet derricks at the No. 5 hatch swung viciously from side to side like gigantic shears.

"Mr. Trutton," said the mate, "you get those derricks under control. Chips, you stay here with Mr. Trutton. That's the first thing. Bosun, you gimme a hand here on the poop, and two of you men! Look alive!"

An old deck hand said—

"Aye, we must look alive if we want to live, that's true, too!"

"How are we going to get them blinking things to stop swinging?" said Richards. "Who's going to pass a line round 'em, eh?"

Peter said:

"You are for one! We all are! Come on, m' sons, nip into it! Chips, here!"

Afterward Peter had an uncertain recollection of the ship rolling so far over to starboard that he wondered if they would ever be upright again and of seeing one of the big booms moving toward him swiftly, of ducking his head, and of a terrific crash. Then he was under water, fighting for life, struggling to hold his breath. He came to the surface in the starboard scuppers, dazed and sick, with the carpenter and Curbrook dragging him by the arms toward the hatch.

"Derrick hit you!" gasped the carpenter. "Lucky it didn't get you fair. Hurt, mister?"

"Hurt!" Peter had said. "Not a scrap."

He had, he remembered, broken loose from their grasp and put his hands to his head and seen blood on his fingers. There was the taste of blood in his mouth, blood and sea water. He remembered, too, laughing. The sea water cure for seasickness and homesickness and blows on the head from derricks!

"Come on, m' sons, let's get those —— derricks made fast!"

After that, though, everything became hazy. It was difficult to recall what had happened or how. Events in the retrospect seemed jumbled together in no coherent order.

HE COULD recollect intense pain in his head, pain like a knife stab in his right shoulder, freezing cold everywhere, icy water sweeping over him, thick, blinding snow falls, the howling of the wind, the fear of death, heavy booms sweeping wildly above the hatch, crashing one against the other, threatening disaster at each instant, until at last secured by some miracle of strength and agility and lashed.

After that, the poop, tilting and precipitous, swept by seas; toil, heartbreaking, backbreaking; the starboard chain disconnected and taken away to the engine room for a new link to be forged; the hand steering gear connected up and smashing immediately; the wheel splintering into fragments; the heavy steel quadrant freed of all control swinging fiercely from side to side, stronger than the tackle with which they tried to hold it; the agony of fingers nipped and sliced; danger and snow and cold and pain; Briggs, the steward, white-faced, at one's side, grinning mirthlessly his hoarse whisper—

"That there Pratt's in the pantry, saying his prayers and wondering when we're going to sink!"

And a sudden snarl and a thin, sneering voice—

"That's a —— lie! I'm here, the same as you!"

All these things Peter could remember. There were other things, too, he remembered: Grim, hard faces, seen in the cold, gray light of the morning, the limp body of an ordinary seaman, a boy, hurled against the starboard Samson post and washed away into the swirling foam, the mate's gruff:

"Mr. Trutton, you're done for! Get out o' this, quick!"

Another voice, his own—

"I won't!"

For how could he leave the poop while Pratt was there, working? trying to shackle the quadrant with the rest of them? Pratt whom he despised!

Some one had said:

"Why are you here, Pratt?"

"Where else do you think I'd be," Pratt had answered, "but where I can see them I hate! Before I drown, I've got one or two things to say!"

And even then in that wild chaos, death imminent, there had been a smothered laugh.

Crazy Pratt!

Looking back, long after the heavy block had been shackled on and the quadrant made fast by a strong tackle, wire taken over the drum of the winch, the rudder hauled hard over and secured, and the chain, the new link in its place, brought on deck by engineers and firemen, bruised and burnt and drenched, and connected up with the quadrant, Peter had wondered why he should have been so amazed at seeing Pratt by his side, on the poop, working!

That had needed thought.

Pratt, who was a coward, undoubtedly, had risked his life on the poop, when he might have been lying hid in the pantry.

He made his way slowly toward the bridge deck, limping, exhausted, like a man in a dream.

At the galley Briggs called to him—

"Mr. Trutton, there'll be some hot coffee along in a minute, the fire's alight!"

Hot coffee! Wonderful! He was frozen, numbed, without sensation in arms or legs.

Curbrook and Richards and Watson, in oilskins, wet, bedraggled, clinging to the life lines, were talking to Pratt, still in his thin white jacket and torn trousers, bareheaded, pale, shivering, his black hair lank on his forehead. The deck hands were surprized, so it seemed, but not unkind.

"Wonder to me is, Pratt, you weren't in your bunk, with your head under the blankets!"

"I'm as good as you are, any of you!" said Pratt.

"You are!" said Curbrook. "Of course!"

"I mind that time at Genoa," Richards said, "when we fought the Geordies! You done fine, then, Pratt!"

"A fine feller, that's why!" said Watson.

Peter halted.

"Pratt," he said, "you did good work! We'll make a man of you yet!"

He might, he reflected, have chosen a happier phrase.

Pratt glared at him. The old hate flared out.

"I can get along all right without you making anything of me!" he said.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Pratt, do you hear!" Curbrook said. "I told you before. I won't tell you again!"

"You think I'm a —— fool, the lot of you!"

"We know it!" said Watson.

"I'm not!" said Pratt. "I'm not!" His voice rose shrilly and broke.

"I'll think you're worse than a fool if you don't get dry things on!" said Peter.

He walked slowly on, then, toward the saloon alley way and his own room.

The effort to puzzle out the reason for Pratt's action, his motives, was too much for him. He wanted to lie down and rest. He wanted something to make his head stop throbbing.

That same night at midnight when he went on to the bridge to take his watch once more the wind had fallen, the sea had moderated, the moon shone from a clear, cloudless sky. The *Ormidale* was once more on her course, bound for Sulina.

He stood for a moment on the lower bridge, watching the moon's reflection on the water.

Briggs's voice came to him—

"Here, Pratt, what are you doing?"

"You mind your own business!"

"It is my business. You been told about hanging round here at night before. I won't have it!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Pratt. "Leave me alone!"

Briggs muttered under his breath and then went into the alley way.

Peter saw Pratt leaning over the rail at the break of the bridge deck, under the lower bridge, staring out to sea. There was in the limpness of his attitude a dejection and forlornness that touched him. He wondered as he climbed the ladder to the upper bridge whether Pratt's disobedience to orders, his presence at midnight near the saloon deck house, had been intended as a gesture of defiance or not. He might, of course, by appearing on deck in the moonlight, merely have been showing that he had not been hiding the time Curbrook had found him in the darkness.

A strange character, anyway.

THE mate, followed by the second engineer and Peter, led the way into the officers' room at the back of big Bertha's café at Sulina. They seated themselves on cane chairs at a table near the piano where a wizened-faced little old Russian woman was strumming a waltz. Two couples danced in the open floor space between the small tables. The room, which was heated by an upright Roumanian stove with tiled sides, was very hot and close and heavy with the smell of stale liquor and tobacco.

"This is it!" said the mate. "The place isn't what it used to be, anyway!"

"When were ye ever in a café in Sulina or Galatz or Braila that was!" said the second engineer. "What wull ye drink? Scotch!"

"Or what passes for such these days, yes!"

A stout, snub-nosed Greek girl with black, twinkling eyes and a broad grin, took their orders and departed in the direction of the bar.

"Beats me what we see in dives like this," said Peter. "They're all the same. Whenever I'm in one I feel like bursting into tears I get so —— melancholy!"

"You're a cheerfu' companion fur a nicht ashore, Peter," said the second engineer. "Smile, or I'll brain ye!"

The girl brought their drinks on a tray.

"You haff a goodt time, hey?" she said archly.

"That's where you make a mistake," said Peter. "Nobody has a good time here! It isn't possible!"

"Dae ye think we wud be in a dump like this if there was a respectable weel laid-oot cemetery to sit in, eh, Flossie?"

The girl looked puzzled, then smiled.

"No savvy!"

"I dinna blame ye," said the second engineer. He paid for the drinks. "And, Phyllis, listen, ye can keep the change."

"Zank you ver' mooch!" said the girl. "You ver' kindt!"

"No," said the second engineer. "It's no' that at a'! I'd rather gi'e it you as a free gift than ha'e ye freeze on to it, which you intendit to do, onyway! Unnerstaun'! An' dinna spend it on frivolity!"

The girl giggled.

"You ver' fonny!"

The proprietress of the café, Bertha, a stout German woman, approached and the girl nodded and walked off.

"Well, Bertha," said the mate, "your shadow's growing no less, is it?"

"I ver' well, mister!"

"How's business?"

The stout woman held up her hands and closed her eyes and sighed.

"Ah! well you may ask! Badt! Too few sheeps!"

"Dear, dear!" said the mate. "And so you're running the place at a loss, still, are you? That's terrible! Bertha, is there any chance of your going bankrupt, do you think?"

She looked quickly from one grinning face to another and then, apparently, grasping the fact that the mate was making fun of her, she smiled and shook her head.

"You bad man, mister!" she said and waddled away to the bar.

"Respectable old dame, ain't she?" said Peter. "Look at her, Mac!"

"Ah!" said the second engineer. "And in a year frae noo, mebbe, or twa, you may rin across her on the Riviera, perhaps, or in Italy, and she wudna recognize ye! She'd be a lady at large, living on her private fortune, inherited frae her auld father, and hob-nobbing wi' priests of a' degrees frae Cardinals doon, and ye cudna get butter to melt in her mouth if ye tried! Respectable's no' the word for it! She's mad' a fortune oot this place o' hers, I lay!"

"Out of us, you mean!" Peter said. "What's it they say sailors do? Earn their money like horses, spend it like asses! That's us, every time! Lord! what swill this whisky is!"

They sat and drank their whisky and smoked and talked and listened to the tinkling music of the piano. And then the second engineer waved away the cloud of tobacco smoke with his hand and peered across the room and chuckled.

"Look!" he said. "Little Albert, the ship's mascot!"

Peter turned his head.

"Good Lord! what's *he* doing?"

Pratt, the second steward, sat at a table by himself in a corner on the other side of the room. He slouched back in his chair, a look of misery on his pale face, his cap at the back of his head, a glass of whisky before him. He raised the glass to his lips and gulped.

"He told me he didn't drink!" said Peter. "He'll drown if he swallows it down like that!"

"Why isn't he in the front room?" said the mate.

"Said he was an officer, mebbe, and Bertha believed him! She would!" said Peter. "It's his money she wants, not his company, anyway. In here, he'll pay more for his drinks: so what's it matter?"

"That's whaur ye mak' a mistak'," said the second engineer thickly. "It does matter. To me, at least. Funny thing, that—I'm no one. If I ever had a hame I canna mind it noo, and you, Peter, you're the son of the rich Sir Robert Trutton, of Trutton, Trevett and Hopkinson, who pay me ma wages! Dae ye see the difference between us? I ocht to be tolerant like you, I ocht to see the guid in folks! A-weel, I try to, but when it comes to seeing the guid in Pratt, that ends it! I canna dae it! I'm gaun to heave him oot o' here, Peter. I've got to, to presairve what feeling o' self-respect I ha'e left!"

"Let the poor beggar be, Mac! What harm's he doing?"

"Don't miss this!" said the mate. "Watch!"

The stout, snub-nosed Greek girl had crossed the room to where Pratt was sitting, slouched back in his chair, and had set another glass of whisky down in front of him. He looked at her blankly, fished some coins out of his pocket and paid her, then lifted his glass to his mouth and drank thirstily. The girl dropped into the chair opposite and sat with her chin on her hands and her elbows on the table and talked to him.

Pratt stared straight through her, it seemed, as though unaware of her presence.

The Russian woman at the piano stopped playing.

In the sudden silence the girl's broken English carried across the room.

"You ver' naice young man! Mebbe you laike to gi' me kiss, hey?"

Pratt, for all the notice he took, had not heard her. He drank some more whisky.

The girl, still smiling, stretched out her arm and with her fingers stroked him gently on the cheek.

Pratt frowned and blinked his eyes. Then, aware for the first time, apparently, that there was a woman seated opposite him, annoying him, he raised his hand and with the open palm struck her hard on the wrist.

"Get out of here, you slut!" he said.

The girl, her broad, swarthy face red, her eyes sullen, nursed her wrist.

Pratt leant back in his chair again and stared into space.

"I tell you what it is," said the mate, "the man's in a kind of trance!"

"Like one o' those Malays you see at Java with what they call *lâtah*," said the second engineer. "You've seen 'em, Mr. Ryan, ha'ena ye?"

"The idiot's asking for trouble, whatever it is!" said Peter.

As though he had heard, Pratt turned his head and gazed straight at him. A dull red color crept into his cheeks. He frowned and turned once more and finished his drink.

The girl rose to her feet, rested one hand on the table and snapped the fingers of her other hand in his face.

"You dronken beast!"

"Get me some more whisky!" said Pratt.

Without taking the glass shoved toward her she hurried away.

Big Bertha approached.

"What you been say to her, hey?"

"Get me some more whisky!" said Pratt.

Bertha scowled and picked up the glass.

"You be'ave!" she said.

"But she'll get him his whisky, all the same," said the mate. "I know old Bertha! She's angry, but she won't throw away a chance of making some money!"

AND then the girl appeared once more from the doorway that led to the front room, walking briskly, with a certain intensity of purpose in her manner and carriage.

A broad, thick-set, red-headed man followed her, grinning sheepishly.

The girl halted by Pratt's table.

"Here," she said, "put 'im out!"

The red-headed man leant over Pratt.

"Come on," he said, "out you go!"

"Look!" said Peter. "Isn't that that deck hand from the *Ganton* who was in that scrap at Genoa?"

"I believe it is," said the mate. "The *Ganton's* lying at the Three Mile Post! What's going to happen now?"

Pratt was, to all appearance, quite oblivious of what the red-headed man had said to him. He glanced at him once, blinked his eyes, and then looked away again.

"Lemme alone!" he said.

The red-headed man caught hold of his jacket by the collar and dragged him to his feet. The chair fell with a clatter. The music stopped once more.

Pratt seemed dazed.

"You lemme alone!" he said.

"You're talking, aint' you?" said the red-headed man. "I'm going to show you it don't pay to insult a lady! Come on! No nonsense!"

Big Bertha returned with Pratt's drink.

She stared at the red-headed man with an expression of concern on her pale face.

"What you do here?" she said.

Pratt took the glass of whisky which she had set down on the table by his side and flung the contents at the red-headed man.

"That's what I think of you!" he said.

The red-headed man wiped his eyes with his sleeve.

"You're asking for it, ain't you!" he said. "All right. Now you get what's coming to you, without no more talk nor argument!"

He grabbed Pratt by the wrist suddenly and twisted him about until his arm was doubled behind his back and he was helpless.

"You lemme alone!" said Pratt. "You're hurting!"

"I mean to hurt!" said the red-headed man.

Peter sighed and rose to his feet.

"Don't you interfere, Mr. Trutton!" said the mate sharply. "You hear!"

"I hear," said Peter.

He crossed the room to where the red-headed man and Pratt and the girl and big Bertha were standing.

He tapped the big man's shoulder and said:

"Now, listen, friend, you clear off out of this before there's any more trouble! Let that man alone!"

The red-headed man turned.

"Who the —— are you?" he said.

"Never you mind who I am!" said Peter. "You're going to let go of that man, or there'll be trouble! He's done you no harm! Get out!"

"Done me no harm!" said the man. "Threw his whisky all over me, he did, and you say he's done me no harm! Do you see my face!"

"It hurts me more than it does you," said Peter. "You don't have to look at it! I do!"

The red-headed man released his hold on Pratt's wrist.

"You want a thick ear, you do!" he said slowly.

"Never mind what I want!" said Peter. "It's what I'm going to get that counts! Touch that man once and see!"

The red-headed man shifted his weight from one foot to the other and scowled and clenched and unclenched his fists and looked first one way and then the other.

"Ain't I seen you before?" he asked.

"You have," said Peter. "On Genoa waterfront. I had the extreme gratification of helping to lay you out!"

And then Pratt, white to the lips, his nostrils puffed out, said:

"I don't want any favors from you, mister! Do you understand? Why can't you mind your own business and not always come interfering in what doesn't concern you?"

He turned on his heel, without another word, and walked slowly away. Not until he had disappeared through the door that led to the front room did any one speak.

The red-headed man said:

"Well, that settles that, don't it? Next time any one wants to teach that little worm manners, mister, I'd let them do it!"

"Who pay for der whisky, hey?" said Bertha. "Who pay for der whisky he t'row avay!"

She held out her hand.

"Ask his friend, not me," said the red-headed man. And he, too, walked in the direction of the door at the end of the room.

"I'll pay," said Peter. "You needn't be scared you'll lose your money!"

He went to his table and sat down.

The mate and the second engineer surveyed him gravely.

"Well," he said, "that's that!"

"It is," said the mate.

"It isna!" said the second engineer. "Peter, you take ma tip; keep your e'en skinned! I dinna trust thon man, Pratt, a yard. He's bad. The way he lookit at ye jist noo showed what he thinks o' ye! He's mean. If I'd been you, Peter, I'd have left him to his licking. Mebbe it wud ha'e done him guid, taught him manners, perhaps. He's bad and he's mean and he's dangerous. That's what I make of him. You lauched when I told ye aboot the Chink and his knife and the fourth engineer, but it's the truth. Things like thon dae happen at sea. Queer things! Pratt's a cauld bluided wee de'il, he's capable of onything! You mark ma worruds!"

"Oh, I dunno!" said Peter. "There's more good in Pratt than you think, perhaps! I wasn't going to see him slaughtered, anyway!"

"I wunner if he'd been so —— considerate to you, Peter! I canna see the least little bit o' guid in him!"

"He did his best on the poop four days back, anyway!" said the mate. "He worked hard. Didn't shirk."

"Yes," said Peter, "and I take back what I said about him being a coward! He's not!"

"He is!" said the second engineer. "What fur didna he gi'e the red-heid a skelp on the jaw jist noo, eh?"

"Dunno," said Peter. "He's not a coward, all the same. Perhaps he hoped I'd get a thrashing. He hates me, of course! You heard what he said, didn't you?"

"That he didna want ony favors frae you, yes!" said the second engineer. "You tak' ma advice, Peter, and steer clear o' him! He's one of those nasty, jealous little ticks that get it into their heids to dislike some one better than themselves and they canna let things be till they've done him some mischief!"

"You saved him a licking, anyhow!" said the mate. "He owes you something in return for that, doesn't he?"

The second engineer chuckled.

"He'll hate ye waur' nor ever, Peter! You see! That girl, he gi'ed her a bit of a jolt, eh? That's Pratt a' o'er!"

"I'd have given her a bit of a jolt myself," said Peter, "if she'd started to paw me like she did him!"

"You, you old misogynist! You've got no real romance in you, that's why!"

"Romance! God! Waterfront romance! It's like waterfront whisky!"

"Cheap at the price and bad in its after effects, eh!" said the mate.

The stout girl stood at their table and frowned at Peter.

"Why for you no let 'im get lick, hey?"

"To tell you the truth," said Peter, "you weren't worth it!"

"That ends it!" said the mate. He got up from his chair. "Come on, Peter, let's go!"

"Pigs!" said the girl. "I hate you!"

"Reciprocated!" said the second engineer.

HALF an hour after they had left big Bertha's café the mate and the second engineer and Peter were seated in the stern sheets of a boat and were being rowed by two Roumanian boatmen, muffled in sheepskins, to where the *Ornidale* lay on the other side of the river, higher up, on the outskirts of the town.

The night was very cold; colder, it seemed, on the water than on dry land. Snow had fallen since they had left the ship earlier in the evening. The full moon showed in the gaps between the clouds racing across the sky. The wind blew cold across the marshes from Russia.

"Hard work, eh, Johnny!" said the mate to the man rowing stroke. "Big pull!"

The man grunted.

"Gosh! there's a current runnin'!" said the second engineer.

Peter dipped the tips of his fingers into the water.

"Like ice!"

"Not much chance for a man if he falls overboard here," said the mate. "The surface current's strong, but it's nothing to what's deeper down! You don't rise. You just sink and you keep sunk, and mebbe they'll find your body next day down by the bar, mebbe they won't!"

"So I've heard!" said Peter. He shivered with sudden cold.

He wished he was on board ship, in his blankets. This business of being pulled in an open boat a night like this made going ashore madness. He moved his right arm uncertainly. His shoulder ached. That, he reflected, was due to the smash he had had the time the quadrant took charge. He wondered how soon he would be able to use his arm without pain. Things like that, he knew, didn't get well in a hurry.

He wasn't complaining. He was lucky he hadn't been badly hurt. He was lucky he hadn't been washed off the poop and drowned. If it came to that, they were all lucky. When a ship broached to and lay in the trough, helpless, anything might happen. If they had sunk—the words used by the mate flashed into his mind—what chance would a man have had? None, in that sea! ——! how would they have got a boat over the side, to begin with? He thought, then, of Pratt, whom he had saved from a licking; Pratt, by his side on the poop, working; Pratt, drinking in big Bertha's; Pratt, the coward, refusing to fight! Ah! but was he a coward? That was the mystery!

There was something he felt he had discovered in Pratt that was new, some hint, as it were, of a hidden strength, perhaps, a tenacity of purpose, a determination, that made it difficult to thrust the thought of the man out of one's mind. There was good in him as well as bad; and, strangely enough, the good had more power than the bad had!

He wondered why he should have drawn such an absurd inference, formed such a ridiculous estimate of the man's character!

Pratt was a coward. McCall was right. Why hadn't he given the red-headed man a —what was it? —a skelp on the jaw?'

The boat's progress was suddenly checked.

"Way enough!" said the mate.

Peter looked up and saw in the darkness the black hull of the *Ormidale* looming above them.

"Hame at last!" said the second engineer. "Hame frae sea, an' the hunter hame frae the hill! Which, ma lad, is poetry!"

"Lord, I'm cold!" said Peter.

The boatman in the bow caught hold of the accomodation ladder. Slowly the boat was guided alongside.

"Hold tight!" said the mate. "Out you get, Mac!"

The second engineer stepped on to the grating at the foot of the ladder.

"Here's your money!" said the mate. He paid and grasped the rope of the ladder. "I'd better get out next, Peter!"

He stepped on to the grating.

The moon that had appeared for a moment was hidden by a cloud .

Again Peter shivered.

How cold it was! And how dark!

He rose to his feet and with his right hand gripped the boat's gunwale: with his left he reached for the rope.

He caught hold of the rope, let go of the gunwale and prepared to step on to the grating. And then—how it happened he could not conceive in that brief instant between safety and disaster—the boat's stern swung out from the side of the ship, he lost his balance and stepped into ice cold water, his hand slipped from the rope, and he sank.

The cold numbed him, struck through the very fibre of his being. The pressure on his lungs seemed unbearable. He rose to the surface in darkness, frozen, and was swept away, struggling to swim against the current and failing.

——! how his shoulder ached!

A shout, high-pitched, faint, reached him:

"All right, Peter. Hang on, old son! We'll get you!"

He cried feebly. His voice was a whisper, lost in the moan of the wind and the roar of the Danube.

His face was under water. He remembered what the mate had said in the boat and struggled to keep afloat. If he sank again he might never come to the surface. The weight of the heavy coat he wore was dragging him under. He heard faintly a shout and a splash.

He was being carried away from the ship, downstream toward the mouth of the river. He would drown, he knew, before they reached him, before the boat could overtake him and pick him up.

How cold it was! And yet, somehow, he was no longer cold. A slow warmth crept over him. Why struggle? Why try and swim?

He wanted to sleep. How easy it would be! To turn over and sleep!

He heard then the quick regular stroke of a man swimming in pursuit of him, swimming swiftly.

He was not surprized, not grateful to the unknown swimmer, exactly, only puzzled, sleepily puzzled, that any one should risk death by diving after him!

The moon came out from behind the heavy clouds. He saw a head dark in the patch of silver bobbing up and down, coming nearer and nearer.

"Make haste!" he whispered. "I can't last—make haste!"

Probably the man, the swimmer, whoever he was, the mate, McCall, perhaps, he did not know, would never hear him!

His head was under water again. He was sinking. Dying! Dead!

By what he knew was his supreme effort

he rose to the surface once more and breathed. But he was frightened. Death had touched him. Death, and he wanted life.

The swimmer was quite close to him now, he could hear quick, hoarse breathing.

He sank again. He was growing weaker. He would drown, he knew, unless he could be supported. His senses, dimly he realized, were slipping away from him.

Life was no longer worth fighting for, yet he fought.

His outstretched arm found support, was flung about a man's arm, his neck, his shoulder, something. He clung on grimly, in an agony, came to the surface, to the moonlight and the fresh air and the cold, and breathed.

"Let go, blast you!" said a hoarse voice. "Let go!"

He heard but did not obey. If he did as he was told he would drown.

An inner voice seemed to be shouting at him. He would drown. If he let go, he would drown.

And so he clung on, with all the strength that remained to him, was conscious for an instant of a wild struggle in the freezing water, of cramp creeping over him—if he did as he was told, he would drown!—of lights flashing in his eyes, bright and powerful, like steamers' searchlights in the Canal, of the creaking of oars, louder and louder—if he let go, he would drown! hang on! hang on!—of the hoarse voice in his ears cursing him, of a hand trying to tear away his crooked arm from whatever it was supported him, and then at last of being so drowsy, so tired, that he fell asleep, soothed by the murmur of the water in his ears.

* * *

HE CAME to himself, hours later, it might have been, or minutes, he did not know, stripped, wrapped in hot blankets, warm, after he had been frozen, and he was in his own berth, in his bunk, with the captain and Briggs, the steward, beside him, staring at him gravely like, he felt, a couple of large owls, the electric light shining on their wrinkled faces.

"That's good!" said the captain. "Drink this, mister, and you'll feel a heap better!"

He drank what was in the mug held to his lips. A glow spread through body and limbs.

"You're to take things easy!" said the Captain. "You're not to talk!"

"Just one thing!" he said. "Who hauled me out?"

"The second steward!"

"What!" The harshness of his own voice surprized him, almost shocked him.

"Yes, Pratt. Isn't that his name, steward? Pratt. Jumped in from the after deck, swam after you, and held you up till the boat reached you! As good a thing as I ever saw!"

"Yes, sir, that's the queer part of it!" said Briggs.

"The current had carried the pair of you down through Sulina almost when we got you. If it hadn't been for Pratt, you'd have drowned. You gave him a good deal of trouble, one way and another, too!"

And that was something to make a man think, something to worry him, when he didn't want to be worried. Pratt had jumped in from the after deck, had swum after him, kept him from sinking, saved his life at the risk of his own!

Pratt, the coward!

Pratt, who had hated him!

How slow they must have been in turning the boat, though!

Peter lay still and pondered for a long, long time and then he sank into an easy sleep.

The second engineer was smoking his after dinner pipe near the galley when Peter came on deck.

"Hullo, Peter," he said. "Hullo! So they've let you get up, then, eh?"

"As a matter of fact, they haven't," said Peter. "Officially, I'm still in my bunk. The old man told me to stay there, but I said if he wanted to croak me, he was going the best way about it! And so I got up!"

"Hoo are ye feelin' the noo?"

"My shoulder's as stiff as blazes, Mac: otherwise I'm fine." He laughed. "Thought I was a gone coon, last night, all the same!"

The second engineer scratched his chin with his thumb.

"An' sae it was Pratt saved ye frae droonin', eh?"

"Yes. Queer that, wasn't it?"

"Aye! He cam' oot strong, Pratt did, when ye least expectit it!"

Briggs, the steward, stopped on his way to the galley.

"Pratt, yes, sir. He came out strong, same as Mr. McCall says. But he's more crazy than ever he was before, even! He's not done a hand's lick of work all day!"

"He's crazy a' richt," said the second engineer. "But no' to dae ony work is nae proof of it! I'm daein' —— little masel'!"

"Where is he now?" said Peter. "I'd like to speak to him."

"Where is he now!" said the steward. "That's what I'm trying to find out! I've been looking for him all over the ship, almost, and he's disappeared. Too much the hero for me, Pratt is; he's presoomin' on it!"

Curbrook, the big deck hand, carrying a paint pot, drew near. He grinned at Peter.

"Glad to see you up and about again, Mr. Trutton!"

"Thank you, Curbrook."

"I was speaking to Pratt this morning, sir. I told him I took back what I'd called him after that fight at Genoa. I'd been wrong. He said he didn't care if I was. When I said something about him saving you from being drowned, he said, begging your pardon, sir, drowning was an excellent way out of a man's troubles!"

"You don't mean to say he's going to do anything like that, do you?" said Peter. "Where the blazes is he?"

"Dunno, sir. Thought I'd mention it, like!"

"Noo I come to think of it," said the second engineer, "I saw Pratt aboot ten minutes syne. He was gaun aft!"

"I'll go and see," said Peter. "I don't like it when a man talks about drowning being a way out of his troubles! Sounds a —— sight too much like the truth!"

He descended the ladder on to the well deck and walked aft. As he climbed the ladder at the break of the poop he saw Pratt leaning over the rail at the stern, peering down at the water beneath.

"Pratt!" he said.

Pratt turned.

"Well," he said dully, "what is it?"

"Come away from that rail, you might overbalance and fall!"

"What difference would it make to you if I did fall?"

"Only this, that you jumped in last night and saved my life; I'd have to jump in and save yours, or try to, and my shoulder's so —— stiff and sore I don't want to try it too hard!"

"I jumped in and saved your life, did I!" said Pratt.

"Of course," said Peter.

"Why should I jump in and save you?" said Pratt.

Peter was puzzled.

"I don't know why, but you did! I thought it was because I'd saved you from a licking, perhaps, at Bertha's! That was what you might call conceit on my part, eh?"

"——!" said Pratt.

"Anyway, you saved my life and I want to thank you!"

"I saved your life and you want to thank me!"

"I'd have been drowned but for you!"

Pratt rocked to and fro in what seemed crazy laughter.

"Mr. Trutton, I didn't jump in and save your life. Don't you believe it! I didn't. No, sir. I wanted to kill you. I'd been planning to kill you for six months!"

"Oh!" said Peter quietly. "That's news! Go ahead, Pratt!"

"When you slipped, I was on the bridge deck, looking down on you. Before the mate and the second engineer could get into the boat and shove off after you, I'd run aft a bit to the well deck yonder and jumped. I'm a good swimmer, mister. And the current helped. I got you first."

"And saved my life!"

"No, mister, that's where you make a mistake! I didn't. Do you know what I tried to do, what I'd planned to do, on the spur of the moment, like? I was going to tell you who I was, and why I was in the water, and then drown you! But I couldn't. Do you understand? I couldn't, not without drowning myself. And that wasn't part of my plans! You —— near drowned me, instead! You got hold of me under water and —— near choked me with that arm of yours round my neck! I had to fight to save myself from being dragged under, and I saved you, without meaning to. I ought to have had grit enough to have gone under and taken you with me. I couldn't. Do you see? I wanted to live too much!"

"Then you're not planning to do away with yourself or anything, after all?" said Peter.

"——, no!" said Pratt. "What put that into your head?"

And after that there was a long silence. Peter stared in perplexity at Pratt's pale face and then gazed past him toward the town and the shipping. The sun was shining. The wind had dropped. The river, a tawny yellow color, flowed rapidly past the ship. A steamer was coming down stream, stern first, from Galatz. A Danube Commission tug boat passed, towing a string of lighters. On either side stretched the marshes covered with tall withered reeds. Crows flew past, cawing hoarsely. Hogs rooted in the mud on shore.

All these things Peter took in at a glance. And as he looked he pondered.

Pratt had not saved his life, after all. Pratt had tried to drown him. Pratt would have drowned him, had he not struggled and held on to him, so that in saving his own life Pratt had saved his.

"Pratt," he said, "what's the trouble between us? I've done nothing to you, have I?"

"No," said Pratt heavily, "*you've* done nothing! No, nothing!"

"It wasn't that mug of sea water, surely!"

"No, it wasn't that mug of sea water. I didn't know at the time you meant it to cure me. I thought you were making me feel worse, more miserable, more unhappy, than I was already. Afterward I knew that it had stopped my seasickness. No, it wasn't that. It was something that happened before I saw you, even!"

"You'd better explain!"

"I'm not a second steward. My name's not Pratt. Pratt was the name in the discharge book I got from a man I met in Cardiff. Mr. Trutton, I worked as a clerk for the firm that owns this ship and a dozen other ships: Trutton, Trevett and Hopkinson. I lost my job and was ruined. Through no fault of my own! Can you guess what I'm going to tell you?"

"No," said Peter. "No, I can't! Carry on!"

"Your father, Sir Robert Trutton, the shipowner, sacked me. For no cause. That's the truth. Who was I? A clerk, only; a shorthand typist, a stenographer, in his office. He could get a hundred as good as I was by lifting his little finger, but could *I* get a job as good as the one I had? No, I couldn't! He must have known it. Did that matter? Lord, no! Not to Sir Robert Trutton! I went!"

"But why?" said Peter. "What for?"

"Do you know what it means when someone you love is ill? You don't! How could you? My wife had been ill for about a year. The last two months she'd been getting worse. We couldn't afford a nurse all the time, for three nights I'd been sitting up with her. I'd had no sleep and I felt just about finished. I was late starting from home. A man I knew said I was looking queer and gave me some brandy. I was late reaching the office. Your father had come down extra early and wanted me. When I arrived, twenty minutes after my time—that in itself would have been enough!—he smelt the brandy. I'd been drinking! That was the end of everything! He let loose at me. I was inefficient, drunken, worthless. He paid me my money then and there and told me to clear out. After seven years! I tried to explain. He wouldn't listen. I thought of my wife at home, sick, and I let fly at him and said what I thought. I was light-headed, at the time, I suppose, and not responsible."

"You don't mean you hit him, do you?" said Peter.

"Lord, no! I talked, that's all. It made no difference. He had me thrown out of the office into the street. I fought. It took four of them to tackle me. I'm not what you'd call strong either. Four of them. I was thrown out and told if I ever dared show myself round there again, I'd be handed over to the police. You understand, Mr. Trutton! My wife, sick; myself, out of a job, without any money! What could I do, eh?"

He broke off and looked at Peter with a worried, anxious look in his eyes.

"Well," said Peter, "and what did you do, eh?"

"I made up my mind, for one thing, I'd get even with the man who'd ruined me."

"Meaning my father?"

"Meaning your father! Yes. I'd make him pay, somehow, for what he'd done. Not for losing me my job, but for helping to kill my wife. I might have killed him, of course! Where was the good of that? Would that be any punishment, to him? Not the least little bit! No. I planned to kill you. Cold-blooded, eh? Well, you can't say I'm afraid to tell you, can you? I could do no good, staying at home that was clear. You see, Mr. Trutton, my wife didn't know she was dying; she'd not been told. It was better not. She might go any minute; she might last another six months. I'd spent all my savings. I had to have money, somehow. I couldn't earn any at home, I proved that —— quick, but I could at sea! I'd sign on aboard the same ship as yourself. Do you understand? I met a man who'd made two or three voyages as a second steward and had got a shore job. He let me have his discharge book. I signed on here, with you. As I planned, so things turned out. I'd bide my time, I thought, and then when I saw my chance I'd do you in. And no one would ever know!"

Peter was interested.

"How would you have managed it, Pratt?"

"Think for yourself, Mr. Trutton. Aboard ship, at night, in dirty weather, that night when Curbrook found me waiting at the foot of the ladder; on Genoa waterfront; here, at Sulina! Lord! why go on? It'd have been easy! And that's what I had in mind last night when I jumped in after you and tried to drown you."

"Jolly," said Peter. "Go on, Pratt! You're a queer ——! And how do I know you're not going to try and get rid of me now? How do I know I won't be cracked on the head next time I go ashore, or tipped over the rail some night, eh?"

"Well, if it's any comfort, Mr. Trutton, you won't be! Not through me, at least!"

"If you felt the urge, as it were, to do me in yesterday, why not today?"

"Why not today," said Pratt heavily. "I'll tell you. I had a letter from home this morning, Mr. Trutton, saying my wife was out of danger. Definitely so! I can't quite understand it, even now. Three or four doctors have seen her, they say she'll get well. One day she was dying, the next she was on the mend. Queer, isn't it? I thought she was bound to die. I've been building on that. Whenever letters were brought aboard I made sure there'd be one for me, saying she'd gone! They told me again and again there was no hope for her! And so, if you hadn't fought me, I'd have drowned you!" He sighed and gazed once more down toward the mouth of the river and the town. "I wonder what I'd have been feeling like now!"

"Pratt, whatever you are, you're no coward! Why didn't you help Curbrook and the other men that night at Genoa?"

For a time Pratt was silent. He half closed his eyes and squinted at the water rushing past the ship's side. Then he said:

"I'm no fighter, Mr. Trutton. I'm not actually frightened at getting hurt, but I don't like it. At Genoa I wasn't going to run the risk of being laid out for the sake of a drunken crowd of seamen and firemen. Why should I? What good would it have done? I've got a weak heart. Suppose I'd been killed! Men do get killed fighting, don't they? I was saving myself up for you. I had to! All the same, I took risks I shouldn't have done, I know!"

"On the poop, do you mean, when the steering gear carried adrift?"

"No, in big Bertha's café last night! That was one time, anyway!"

"How do you mean?"

"Why did I go into that back room, eh? I followed you in. I shouldn't have. I shouldn't have risked having a drink, even! But I did. I might have landed myself in trouble that time that slut of a girl got fresh with me and tried to make love! I hated myself for being there. I ought to have got out of the place at once. But I didn't. And then when the girl brought that red-headed man in and he wanted to fight I knew I'd let things go too far. If he hit me, he'd smash me up, cripple me, and I wanted to keep myself fit to get rid of you! Do you see what I'm driving at, Mr. Trutton?"

"You threw your drink in his face!"

"Did I?" said Pratt. He seemed astounded. "Perhaps I did! I wasn't sure. My head was bad and I felt—I dunno—half asleep. As soon as I got out I went back to the ship, intending to turn in. I'm sorry I didn't, or glad, just according to whether I really did any good or not!"

"Pratt, tell me, what made you want to kill me?"

"I told you, didn't I? You were your father's son!"

"Yes. I know that. But where's the connection?"

Pratt glanced at him out of the corners of his eyes. He said:

"Mr. Trutton, I thought I'd made it clear losing my job helped to make my wife worse. I'd no money to buy her the things the doctor said she should have. The way I looked at it, it was your father's fault. He sacked me. If he hadn't, I'd have managed. If it wasn't for the money I earn here, and that's little enough, God knows! and the help I've had from some friends of mine, we'd have gone under. Through your father I was losing the only thing I valued on earth, all that made life worth living. For all practical purposes I had lost her. No hope, they told me; no hope she'd ever recover! I'd get even with the old —— somehow, begging your pardon, of course! But how? Why, by doing to him what he'd done to me! Through me he'd lose what he valued most on earth! His son! You! Don't you understand, Mr. Trutton?"

Peter caught his breath sharply.

"Pratt," he said, "you're wrong! If you'd killed me, my father wouldn't have cared a scrap. I'm nothing to him. I never have been. He's nothing to me. He says I set myself against him. I do. But he doesn't try and he never has tried to see things from my point of view. He won't. He gets mad with me and curses me, and I get mad with him. And there you are! Father and son! Typical specimens! Home grown! The biggest —— row we ever had was when I said I was going to sea. He tried to stop me. He couldn't. He only gave in in the end because of the look of the thing. He was scared I'd get taken on as an apprentice by some other firm and he'd be made to look small. He thought I'd get sick of the sea, but I haven't. If he dared, he'd tell the superintendent not to give me another job on any of his ships, but he daren't! People would talk! Father and son falling out, and so on! Pratt, m' son, if I'd been drowned last night in yonder filthy river my father wouldn't have been sorry, he'd have been glad. That's the truth! I know him, through and through! He'd have been glad!"

Again there was a long silence.

Pratt laughed quietly.

"It's a queer world, ain't it?"

"Queer, yes! —— queer!"

"I'm not much good, Mr. Trutton, and though you don't know it, or may not believe it, you've helped me a lot!"

"Have I?" said Peter. "I don't know how. I'm not much good, myself, either! You've done more than help me, Pratt. You've shown me things I wouldn't have seen by myself, not in thirty years! Taught me!"

"How?"

"Oh, I dunno! Things about life. And, besides—" he waved his hand to and fro, vaguely, to cover the sudden gap in his speech, to hide, as it were, the confusion he felt, the embarrassment at acknowledging anything so shameful as an emotion—"besides you saved my life. However you did it, or why, if you hadn't jumped in after me and held me up, I'd have been dead this minute and I'm grateful. I'll never forget. Never."

Pratt's thin, peaked face was red. He said gruffly—

"Mr. Trutton, you said just now if you'd been killed, your father would have been glad!"

"Well, wouldn't he? He would!"

"He would not!"

"You don't know him!"

"I do. Mr. Trutton, I worked in his office for seven years. One way or another he told me more than he thought he did about himself and his family affairs and his hopes and ambitions! Do you think I'd have gone to the trouble of trying to kill you if I hadn't been sure it would have broken his heart? I knew what I was doing, Mr. Trutton. You're all he has, and without you life wouldn't be worth living for him! If he said that to me once he said it a thousand times. I don't mean openly, in so many words, but there it was, what he felt and hoped, a fact! He wouldn't have let you see it, Mr. Trutton, not on any account!"

Peter whistled softly to himself and stared with vacant eyes toward the open sea beyond Sulina.

"Funny. I didn't know it. We're a strange crowd, I know. All of us. And that's what the guv'nor feels about me, is it? Well, well! Is that the truth you're telling me, Pratt?"

Pratt laughed.

"I thought every one knew that!"

"Think he'd do what I asked him?"

"Why not? He'd give you the shirt off his back!"

"Right! Then there's an apology coming to you, Pratt, as soon as we reach home again, and a better job than you've ever had or ever thought you were likely to have. Understand? And if you try to argue or say it's impossible or thank me or any rubbish like that I'll give you what Mr. McCall would term a skelp on the jaw! And you'll be sorry you ever hauled me out of the river."

Briggs, the steward, came up the ladder from the for'ard deck.

"Pratt," he said in an angry voice, "what d'you think you're doing here? I'm sick and tired of running all over the ship after you. This is the last chance you'll have. You don't sign on again in this ship sure as my name's Briggs! Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Trutton, I didn't see you, sir!"

Peter laughed.

"That's all right, Briggs. Pratt, you'd better do as you're told or you'll lose your job! Go with Briggs!"

Pratt grinned sheepishly and went.

HUMAN TROPHIES AMONG THE INDIANS

by Alanson Skinner

BESIDES the custom of taking scalps, many individual Indians were accustomed to take other trophies from their slain victims. In the early Colonial days of New York, then New Amsterdam, the Dutch writers not infrequently speak of their Algonkian Indian neighbors as taking human arms as proof of their prowess. Whether these arms were preserved or not, I have heard on a number of occasions from my Menominee friends in Wisconsin of medicine or tobacco pouches made from the hands of a Sauk. Whether any of these grisly trophies remain, I can not say, though I would not be at all surprized to obtain one, even yet. Potawatomi of the Prairie and Forest bands have also told me of similar articles in their possession, made from the hands of fallen Pawnee and Winnebago. I once found some dried human finger-tips in a Prairie Potawatomi sacred doctor's bundle.

In the National Museum at Washington there is a necklace of dried and strung human fingers, obtained by Captain Burke from a Cheyenne Indian, and in the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, of New York, there is an Oto war-bundle, collected by Mr. M. R. Harrington, that contains a necklace with a human finger as its principal pendant. Mr. Harrington also obtained an Iowa bundle which contains the dried mouth and ears of a fallen foe. The secrets of the warpath could be whispered in the ears, but the mouth, being dead, could not repeat them.

A Cree Indian, whom I once met on the shores of Hudson Bay, told me that his father had once possessed a medicine drum, the heads of which were covered with the raw hide of an Eskimo, whom he had killed in battle. In the mounds of northern Wisconsin I have found at least two bleached human skulls, one trimmed down to make a bowl, that had been placed with prehistoric burials, doubtless because they had been valued trophies of the owner during his life time.

On the whole, these trophies of human skin or bone are very rare in North America, and the American Indian does not seem—north of Mexico—to have taken very great delight in them outside of the scalp. Before we think too hard of him, let us reflect on our own European ancestors, who revelled in quaffing wine from the skulls of fallen foemen.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all
meeting place
for readers,
writers and
adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

WE HAVE had a general view of the dope evil. Here is a close-up from a comrade engaged in the attempt to suppress it.

As to the best prevention, he goes to the heart of the matter.

Comrades of the Camp-Fire: I want to bring before you, if this letter should be fortunate enough to be published, a very real menace to our national life—dope.

It has been my privilege to work with law enforcement officers at various times during the last few months on narcotic cases. I have found them to be earnest, intelligent men who hated dope peddlers with a whole-hearted hatred. They are intent upon enforcing the law and are now doing their utmost toward that end.

FRANKLY speaking, I had never realized what a menace the dope evil really was until I came face to face with it.

A dope peddler is comparable to a mad dog running through a crowd, snapping at every one and making those he bites mad. My personal feeling is that I would rather shoot a dope peddler between the eyes than shoot a mad dog and break his leg. A mad dog is irresponsible. A dope peddler is a cold-blooded fiend who drives innocent people to the depths of shame and degradation. Yes, I say innocent people. Dope peddlers don't pick on the educated mature men and women, but choose their victims carefully from the jazz-mad, sex-mad high-school boys and girls. Not only high-school boys and girls, but the young people who work also suffer.

Perhaps you think I am an alarmist? Here is something to ponder over:

In the past few months three cases have come to my attention that are typical. The first is that of a man of about twenty-nine. One evening he walked into a police station requesting to be locked up as an addict. He said that he had spent his entire fortune for dope and that he was afraid he'd kill some one to get money to buy it with.

The second case is that of a boy of about fifteen. He was apprehended with cocaine in his possession and after a physical examination admitted that he had been an addict for several months.

The third case is that of a high-school girl of sixteen. When we first investigated we could hardly convince her parents that she was an addict. After we confronted her with certain facts in our possession she broke down and confessed that she had been taking cocaine for about six months.

I could go on for an hour and tell of girls driven into lives worse than death by the use of it, of young men who became thieves and worse, of older people, broken mentally and physically, doomed to spend the rest of their lives in asylums through the use of it.

MOST of us around this far-flung Camp-Fire of ours have sisters and brothers younger than ourselves, or sons and daughters. Let's start a campaign of education among them. Let's tell them what a damnable skunk the dope peddler is. Let's tell them what a curse the habit is. And, above all, let's enlist their cooperation.

Our young people are inherently decent. If they know what the dope habit is, they will know how to treat any one that proposes to give them a thrill through "just one shot of snow."

Should this letter be published, please omit my name and address as it would impair my opportunities to work to the greatest advantage. Also some of the readers of this might be able to guess at the identity of the three cases I have mentioned.—X. Y. X.

A SECOND letter followed his first. I take pains to state that the magazine mentioned is not our own. Neither is it, I am glad to say, any of our competitors in the all-fiction field.

Since I wrote my first letter I have talked to several individuals that have a great deal more experience in dealing with the narcotic addicts and the narcotic situation than I have.

Possibly you will be bored with these letters and possibly you will wish you had never undertaken to do your bit in making the world a safer place and in giving our young people a chance to know how damnable the trade in narcotics is, before you are through with my bombardment of letters. However the work is comparatively new to me and I am enraged afresh every time I come in contact with a fresh case.

You are at liberty to print any part of anything I send you with the exception of anything to indicate my identity. I am enclosing a manuscript of a few pages which I have written. I am not a writer, but I had intended to have this printed in pamphlet form at my own expense for free distribution as my part in this fight. You are welcome to use any of it you wish.

SEVERAL days ago I talked with a man who had been on the flying squad of a large metropolitan police force and he told me of the last trip he had made in the "fast wagon." Here, as briefly as possible are the facts of the case:

A young woman of about nineteen years had registered at a cheap hotel. Several hours later the proprietor, hearing a commotion in her room and receiving no answer to his demands for admittance and explanation, called the police. The disturbance increased in violence and when the police arrived and battered down the door they found the girl crouched in one corner of the room, nude, and absolutely insane. The light of reason was completely gone and she was little better than an animal. Medical inspection at the psychopathic ward proved that she was a marihuana (or loco-weed-smoker). She is insane and medical men state she will never regain her sanity. Isn't a case like that enough to make one think? Suppose she had been your daughter or mine?

The other man I talked to was an intelligent doctor who is giving and has given much study to narcotic addicts and methods for their cure. He is very agitated about the so-called romance that is coated over the illicit drug traffic by cheap magazines and yellow newspapers. He contends that by such publicity great harm is being done.

To support his contention he showed me a clipping from an eastern metropolitan newspaper in which an account of the history of a suspected "dope king's" death was given. It played up the fact that he had been arrested a number of times as a suspected dope peddler but was each time able to prove his innocence and defeat the law. Possibly he was innocent. That is not the question. The question is whether the interests of the people are best served by published accounts of such knavery. The other instance was in a story entitled "— —," by — —, published in the — magazine for either June, July or August, 1925. In it, dope smugglers are made to appear as good fellows when they come to the assistance of a pal about to be sent to jail for vagrancy.

Perhaps the dope peddler has a spark of humanity in him, but I have failed to find any trace of it. These are just little things, it is true, but many a mickle makes a muckle. Let's sweep these damnable lies to one side and paint the traffic in the true colors.—X. Y. X.

VERY gladly we give his brief appeal publicity at Camp-Fire. His remedy is the best one—educate our boys and girls so that they will know too much to let themselves be sent down to destruction. Another remedy is to give the dope peddler what he deserves. Can any one tell me wherein he is better than a murderer? Or why he should not be punished at least as severely?

I can tell you why he is not now so punished. Because of this precious materialism of ours—no, what we follow is not even logical materialism, merely mad worship of the Golden Calf. The dope peddler is not so severely punished as the murderers who slay with other weapons because these others have not, as a rule, financed their trade, while the dope peddler follows his on strictly business lines. The very word "business" is sacred in America and in itself a mitigating circumstance. And business, shady business, has its little way of protecting itself from earned punishment. You see, this dope peddling isn't just a matter of human life and happiness; dollars are involved.

Our law itself intervenes to save the dope peddler from the fate of an ordinary murderer. Our law, you will remember, is based on the old English common law, and the old English common law is based wholly and solely on the principle that property is more valuable and more to be protected than are human rights and human life. To be sure, we've trimmed up the law here and there to make it look more decent to those interested in decency, but the old foundation still stands. So the law makes it easier for the dope peddler because of his higher motives—he doesn't sell dope with intent to murder but in order to make money. The materialistic law becomes suddenly idealistic and judges, not by the practical results, but by the motives—the motives of a dope peddler. Oh yes, lawyers, I know you can justify it all to a nicety by citing precedent and principle—as indeed you can justify almost anything you set out to justify. But you can not, perhaps, justify it by any line of reasoning whatsoever without starting from the accepted but quite ridiculous premise that the owner is less important and less valuable than the thing owned.

Quite a number of you materialists have bombarded me from time to time, but will some one of you by way of innovation trace your much used arguments back to some solid foundation, some indisputable principle upon which they can rest? As, for example, this little matter of owner and thing owned. Do you by any chance consider yourself less important and valuable than the things you own? If so, why? If not, well, what becomes of your materialism? You may not consider these the two horns of a dilemma but you might think them over. You might, say, apply the final and unanswerable test, the extremely practical test, of deciding in your own mind which of the following you or any other normal person would be least willing to relinquish—life, happiness, health, property including food. We are, of course, omitting all religious or spiritual considerations, same being irreconcilable with logical materialism and correspondingly offensive to its addicts.

The above does not pose as an argument. I was merely suggesting points of view that may lead you into bombarding me with arguments a bit more fundamental than the threadbare ones thus far received and survived. I've reached a point where I crave something a bit more stimulating. The ones I've been getting were all familiar to me before I ventured to turn my back on materialism as unsound, illogical and, worst of all, materialists, unpractical. Old stuff and in bad repair. You might just as well shout at me your battle-cry and guiding principle that you're ashamed even to whisper to yourselves—"The dollar *über alles!*"

But to return to dope peddlers. In any case they are destroying human life, and even materialism assigns to human life some economic value. Why not stop the waste?

Those of you who are not materialists, consider the case on its merits.

> Should mercy be shown a mad dog? Should mercy be shown a rattlesnake coiled to strike? If you knew that a particularly dangerous and contagious disease had broken out in your neighborhood, would you not take steps to protect your loved ones?
>
> Today we are faced with an enemy more dangerous than a mad dog, more treacherous than a rattlesnake, and leaving its victims physically, mentally and morally weakened. Should mercy be shown to it?
>
> It is an enemy to society, for it creates criminals. It debauches the young manhood and young womanhood of our nation. It takes young men and makes of them liars and thieves. It takes young women and makes of them prostitutes and scarlet women. Should mercy be shown to it?
>
> Where its shadow passes it leaves unhappy homes and children robbed of their heritage of a clean start in life. Its victims are confined to neither sex nor condition. Men and women, the aged and the youth of our country all are food for its ravenous appetite. Where its slimy trail passes, death and insanity follow. It fills our prisons and asylums. In the name of humanity, should mercy be shown to it?
>
> THE illicit narcotic traffic may be divided into two classes—the buyers and the sellers.
>
> The buyers or addicts are to be pitied and deserve an opportunity to be cured. They are often men and women of intelligence whose abilities are held in thralldom by the damnable stuff they call master.
>
> The sellers, or peddlers, are enemies of society, more virulent than an epidemic, more loathsome than leprosy. They must be stamped out, without mercy.
>
> They are traffickers in honor and truth. They deal in blighted lives and disgrace and crime. They are public enemies of the lowest order, for they commit their transgressions for gold.
>
> Let us have done with the so-called "romance" thrown about the drug traffic by yellow newspapers and cheap magazines.
>
> In God's name let us tear the sham from it! Let

us hold it up in the pitiless glare of public inspection. Let us show how vile and contemptible and disgusting it really is.

In justice to our young people, in justice to the generations of the future and in justice to ourselves, let us stamp out the insidious traffic. Let us forget the maudlin halo of romance and remember the stern, grim realities. Let us stamp out this damnable thing without mercy.

It is appalling how ignorant educated people, parents and teachers are of the effects of the use of narcotics. If those of mature judgment do not know, can we expect our young people who lack the judgment and experience of their parents and educators, to understand the consequences of addiction to narcotics?

The drug traffic has too long been hidden under a veil of fiction. It is an unpleasant thing at best, but it is time that the peddler should be shown in his true light, as a debaucher of mankind that makes a buzzard seem as the zenith of culture and refinement by comparison.

It is only fair that every young man and every young woman, that every boy and every girl, should be warned against the peddler and his devil's fruit. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" is an old adage that is exceedingly true in this case.

How much heartache, grief and anguish would have been spared if pitiful victims had only known! How many blasted lives would have been different.

Give your child a chance. Tell him the truth about the damnable stuff and the miserable creatures that traffic in it. Teach him pity for the addicts and hatred for the peddlers, that he may have the understanding and the heart of a real man or woman should he ever come in contact with it.—X. Y. X.

* * *

IT SEEMS only fair for me to own up, especially as I'd been having such a good time listening to the arguments over Julius Cæsar and commenting on the human nature exhibited therein. Well, it's on me.

One of the letters appearing in the argument was from J. A. G. Enders in England. When it mentioned "the eminent Oxford scholar, Sandford Merton, etc.," it did give me pause, but I decided it was a mere coincidence. Well, it wasn't.

The other day a friend who shall be nameless, darn him, walked into the office and calmly explained that he'd written that letter himself.

I haven't any alibi. All I can scare up out of the incident in the way of redeeming features are these:

First, my friend hadn't the faintest idea I'd not recognize it at once as a joke and pass it on as such to Mr. Brodeur, whom it professed to attack and whom it was intended to amuse. This I advance as testimony that I am not habitually that dumb.

Second, the Camp-Fire fellowship has been such that for years past I can remember only one attempt—unsuccessful—to put a joke over on Camp-Fire and me its sergeant at arms, though I have vague recollection of a number of attempts that were too thin to be reckoned, all of them quite a distance in the past. That fact is a compliment, not to me, but to Camp-Fire. Its members find more interesting things than practical jokes for Camp-Fire's time and space—even the Enders letter was not written with any idea that it would reach Camp-Fire.

None of which is an alibi for me. After years without attempts at practical jokes I had let down my guard. Believe me, I've put it up again. Camp-Fire in general isn't going to make any fool attempts on me but the world is full of all kinds of folks and some wit is likely to bob up at any time. Even if he got by, Camp-Fire would catch him, as it did in this Enders case, but why let Camp-Fire be bothered with him if I can help it? I'm by no means fool-proof, but at least I can keep my guard up as in the past.

* * *

IT IS not an unmixed pleasure to dive deep down into our Camp-Fire cache and draw out letters that have lain there a long time since they were written, that should have been printed long ago. But what would you? There are far more letters than we have space for. The best I can do is to select more or less at random, sometimes drawing from recent ones, sometimes drawing from those of past years. A minority demand quick use, either because of current interest or because the various discussions carried on among us must not have too many gaps in them. But for the most part luck determines the selection.

Fortunately many of these letters lose none of their interest by delay. Here is one that, dated February, 1923, is still good hearing after some three years, during which the subject has come up intermittently at Camp-Fire.

Day's Bay, Wellington, New Zealand.

Reading one of your issues of some months ago I studied with special interest a letter from Edward Perry of Ampere, New Jersey, in which he states his belief that there is a Mongolian element in the languages and peoples of North America.

AS AN explorer and a student of Oceanic and some Asiatic languages, ever since I left Oxford University in 1890, I made some discoveries in this line. I have also found abundant evidences of a migration from the highly-civilized peoples of Indonesia (*i. e.* the Hinduized, Malay Archipelago) to the Peruvian seaboard.

I believe the founder of the Manco Capac dynasty of 1250 A.D. to have been an Indonesian chief, probably from North Java, of the people of Sunda. The migration probably included immigrants also from the Visaya-speaking people of the Southern Philippines.

I have carefully avoided technicalities and have contented myself with a few words showing striking evidence of such a migration. If you will put any American scientists interested in this particular line of philology in touch with me, I shall be glad to go much more deeply into the subject with them, as I have collected a great mass of cumulative evidence, and I am anxious that the thing should be properly worked out.

I MIGHT mention that when in London before the War, I saw my old friend, Sir Clements Markham—now unhappily no more—and he saw some of my work and approved of the conclusion of my theory upon the evidences I had collected and set in order.

For many years I have been a corresponding member of The Polynesias Society of New Zealand and have made a special study of Polynesian and Micronesian languages.—F. W. CHRISTIAN.

The early Maori migrations, as evidenced and illustrated by a diagram of the ocean currents and prevailing winds of the Pacific Ocean, and by the Maori and Polynesian names of plants, birds, colors, metals, places, etc., were dealt with in a paper by Mr. F. W. Christian.

THE question of the origin of the Maori and his Polynesian brethren, said Mr. Christian, was bound up with a wider and deeper one—the possibility that South America was discovered by voyagers from the Indian Archipelago.

From the testimony of physical geography, of Maori and of Red Men's traditions, and by cumulative and mutually supporting evidence of language, a strong case seemed to be made out for the claim that early Indonesian voyagers crossed the Pacific, following a course some fifteen degrees above the equator, and discovering Hawaiki, or the eight islands of Hawaii. Some of them stayed there and became the ancestors of the light-brown Polynesian races, ultimately reaching New Zealand by a circuitous course *via* the Marquesas, Mangareva, Tahiti and the Cook Islands. Some of them appeared to have gone on till they struck the coast of South America at Guayaquil Harbor. They not only brought the kumara from Java into the wide Pacific, but also brought it to Peru and Ecuador, where the Inca, the Red Men of Peru and of Quito, call the white potato kumara to this very day.

THE lecturer demonstrated from a skilfully drawn map the influence exerted by the mighty parallelogram of forces formed by the ocean currents and trade winds in carrying forward and scattering flotilla upon flotilla of emigrants from Indonesia in their great sea-going canoes, until they occupied the islands and archipelagoes up to the very shores of the great continent.

In support of the testimony of physical geography and native tradition, the lecturer quoted many tree and bird names, together with names of reptiles, insects, fishes, colors and metals, to prove the far northwestern origin of the Maori in Java and the neighboring islands of the Indian archipelago. He then traced the great migrations outward past New Guinea, and the great duel between the black man and the brown man for the possession of the archipelagoes and scattered islands.

The lecturer showed that many New Zealand plant and tree names, such as totala, kakikatea, karamu, miro, whara, hinau, kutakuta, etc., were Indonesian and Indian names, some of them being even ancient Semitic, dating back to the far-off days when southern Arab and Phenician sailors visited Java and the Malay Peninsula. The name of the kotare, or kingfisher, was traced back through Tahiti to the Carolines, thence to Flores and Java; and the names of the frigate, or bosun bird, and other birds to the ancient sacred language of India. The ngarara or monstrous man-eating lizards of Maori tradition were shown to be identical with the Sanscript name of the crocodile of the Ganges.

THE Maori color names for white, black, red, green, yellow and blue were carefully analyzed and were shown to have ultimately belonged to India and Southeastern Asia, where the forefathers of the Maori had a very fair knowledge of dyeing and of dye stuffs. The lecturer claimed that out of some thousand words in Rarotongan, 60 to 65 per cent. were of Aryan origin, either quite pure or slightly modified from contact with Malay, and that 25 per cent. represented a very early Semitic element, acquired from some language akin to early South Arabic or Phenician; only about ten per cent. of the words suggested a deeply submerged and almost entirely buried substratum of the black or Melanesian element.

"The evidence now available," he concluded, "seems to prove the Maori to be about three-fourths Aryan, and to support and vindicate the theory of Fornander and the later-date views of Mr. E. Tregear and the late Mr. Percy Smith."

Mr. Christian's data for Camp-Fire follows:

To Camp-Fire:—*Re.* Mongolian affinities of North American Indian tribes also later Inca princes of Peru, probably immigrants overseas from Indonesia (*i. e.* the Hinduized Malay Archipelago before the Arab conquest).

In the Appendix to Bancroft's "History of the United States" there is a long list of words collected from the aboriginal languages of North America which anybody who cares to take the trouble can easily compare with words from Chinese, Japanese or Manchurian and satisfy himself beyond all doubt that there has been really and truly some admixture as Mr. E. Perry of Ampere, New Jersey, so convincingly has stated. I enclose three striking examples for the benefit of Camp-Fire readers.

I take it that you could not well get three more simple and primitive key-words than those I have chosen to try the lock with *i. e.* the North American Indian words for "Fire," "Water" and "Stone."

FIRE.

Chinese: *Kung*—to blaze; *Keng*—bright.

Japanese: *Gunuk*—red; *Gnik*, *Guni*, fire.

Ponape (E. Carolines): *Kongkang*, *Ngkong*—to blaze.

Maori (N. Zealand): *Konga*—to glow, a spark; *Kongange*—to blaze.

Ruk (Central Carolines): *Keni*—to burn, burn with fire.

Many Polynesian dialects: *Kanakana*—to shine, blaze; shining, blazing.

Aymara (Peru): *Kanakana*—shining.

Inca or Quichua (Peru) *Kon*—fire, the sun (ancient name); *Konyi*—hot; *Koncha*—the hearth; *Kancha*—the light; *Kankai*—to roast.

Bancroft's Table

Apache: *Kun;* Hicarilla: *Konc;* Unakatana: *Khun;* Umpgua: *Khong;* Coppermine: *Kon;* Chippewayan: *Kun;* Dogrid: *Kun;* Lutchin: *Khon;* Tacully: *Kun;* all meaning "fire."

Probably there are many more cognates both in America and N. E. Asia (probably in Manchuria, the Kuril Islands, and the languages of Indo-China, possibly Eskimo, and in the dialects up by Queen Charlotte's Sound.

WATER, *Liquid.*

Polynesian languages: *Sû, Hu, 'U*—milk, liquid; *To*—to drip; *Toto*—blood.

Malay: *Susuh*—breast.

Ural—Altaic and Mongolian dialects: *Tu, To, Su, Do*—water.

North American Indian languages (Bancroft): *To, Tu, Chu, Tu*—water.

STONE.

Polynesian dialects: Tonga, *Nine;* Samoa, *Maka: Maa*—and others. In old Rarotongan, *Maka.*

Mexican—*Maqua*—obsidian.

Asiatic dialects: Chinese, *Shi;* Japanese, *Ichi;* Other Mongolian dialects, *Tsi, Shi.*

American Indian dialects (Bancroft): *Tsi, Tsi, Si, Shi.*

A few odd notes for American philologists:

INCA WORDS (PERU)—*Manka, Manca*—pottery; *Puru, Pukuru, Pfuru*—a feather; *Tinkullu*—a spinning wheel; *Ahuani*—I weave; *Ahuak*—a weaver; *Ahuana*—a loom; *Tullpu*—dyeing; *Kori: Kuri*—gold (cf. Sanskrit *Gawi: Gur* (a) gold (b) red or yellow color.) Polynesian, *Kura*—a red or yellow color; *Quellai, Kellaya*—iron; *Kachi, Siraka*—salt (Compare Sanskrit *Kach*—salt, alkali and Malagasy *Sira*—salt; Celebes, Malay and other dialects, *Sira, Siran; Tullu*, a bone).

INDONESIAN AND INDIA—*Mangkok, Mangko*—a bowl (Malay, also Gilbert Islands); *Pulu, Fulu*—a feather (Malay, Indonesian and Polynesian); *Tingol*—a spinning-wheel (Visaya and Subanu dialects, south Philippine Islands); *Afvak*—to weave (Igorrote, Philippines); *Afvan*—weaving; *Chelup, Chulup*—to dye (Malay); *Kurzchi, Gurachi*—gold (Eastern Malay); *Kalai, Kallai*—smelted metal (Malay); *Tulang, Tolang*—a bone (Malay and Philippine Islands) also (Central Carolines) *Sral, Tsul, Tru.*

[ED. NOTE:—The handwriting leaves some doubt as to the spelling of the last four words.]

THE reports of a Bolshevist campaign to worm Bolsheviks, particularly their propagandists, into our Army made no mention of the Navy. Here's a comforting word concerning that branch of the service:

United States Fleet,
Destroyer Squadrons, Battle Fleet,
U. S. S. La Vallette (315)
Lahaina, Maui, T. H.

A few words concerning myself might properly serve to make my position clear, and my reasons for writing this.

I AM of old English, Welsh and Irish stock, from New England, on my mother's side, and from Virginia on my father's. Both branches landed here prior to 1630. This merely to show that I am not racially interested in the matter under discussion. I have served in the United States Navy since I was seventeen, a matter of seven years, seeing duty on many stations and in many ships. I have been intimately acquainted with a great number of men in the Navy during that time, and can honestly state that in that time I have never heard Bolshevism discussed with other than antipathy. Indeed, the common term for describing a chronic grumbler, shirk, and trouble-maker is "Bolshevik." I do not believe that there are any zealous workers for what they would call the "Cause" in the Navy. They would certainly receive short shrift at the hands of any to whom they communicated their views, at any rate.

THERE may be some disaffection in the enlisted strength of the Army, though it would take much stronger and conclusive evidence than any I have seen presented at Camp-Fire to make me believe that there is any serious propaganda being disseminated and, what is more to the point, absorbed therein. I freely admit that I have no particular knowledge of the Army, its personnel, organization, or ways of thinking, and this is merely a presumption on my part, lacking anything other than talk to the contrary. The personnel can not be compared in any way to the personnel of the Navy, for the following reasons:

The average or collective age of the Navy is only twenty-four years per capita. There are many requirements that must be met before the prospective recruit may be enlisted. He must prove citizenship, birthplace, age, and must have a certain standard of education.

He must also furnish references, at least three, of employers, teachers, banks, business men or other presumably reputable people that he has known and that know him. These references are investigated independently by the recruiting authorities. He must pass intelligence tests at the training stations prior to being sent to the fleet for duty, and is carefully examined and kept under surveillance during the time he is undergoing his preliminary training. Failure to measure up to certain standards results in his being discharged. Of course, a certain percentage of poor men do slip through, and are sent to sea. Once on board ship, however, their true character is soon discovered and they do not, as a rule, last long in the service.

I find on reading back that I have nearly become involved in a dissertation on recruiting, but it may show you that it's pretty hard for a real dyed-in-the-wool Bolshevik to get into the outfit, let alone spreading the tenets of his political faith. I know that no such standards prevail in the Army; if they did, it would be almost impossible to get recruits, as the pay and living conditions are poor compared to those that prevail in the sister service, not to speak of those in the civilian walks of life.

I have read and enjoyed *Adventure* ever since I discovered it in the reading room of the Navy Y.M.C.A. in Shanghai, China, when I was serving in the destroyer squadron of the Asiatic Fleet. Since that time I have missed one issue. I always read the "dope in the back," and the letters from other members of the clan. Have never written before, though, not so much from a sense of modesty or reticence, as from the fact that I had nothing particular to say. However, the talk anent Bolshevism succeeded in getting under my skin, and so you have to suffer to the extent of reading this. I would certainly enjoy hearing more about this matter of revolutionary tendencies in either of the services through the columns of Camp-Fire.

AND while this is in the "mill" I wish to commend the magazine's stand on the anti-weapon laws. I agree that there must be some powerful organization behind the movement, as it has cropped up practically simultaneously in nearly every legislature in the country. I do not think it is coincidence. If laws may not prohibit the free transportation and sale of liquor in any State, town or hamlet in the length and breadth of the United States, how do the reformers expect to enact a law that will automatically cause all people to turn in their pistols and refrain from buying or making more? I certainly would not hand mine, if I owned one, to some John Law because an asinine piece of legislation demanded it.

Well, this is about all I have to say, so I will knock off. I would like, as I said before, to hear these matters discussed at Camp-Fire, and some proof brought forth, if possible.

Merely an unsubstantiated statement is not very conclusive, at least to me.—REESE D. TITTLE.

P.S.—If this happens to be published, you may use my name if you wish. I have said nothing that I can not prove, and would welcome the chance.—R. D. T.

Good for the Navy. I hope this is a thoroughly sound analysis.

As to Red activity in general, an Army man sends us the following from *The Century*, Bulletin of the 100th Division Organized Reserves:

There has come into our hands a copy of the "May Day" proclamation of the "Reds in America," issued through the "Daily Worker," the organ of the communists, published in Chicago.

IT IS in the shape of a large poster with the text of the proclamation in the center in bold face type, and has a lot of crude illustrations all around the margin, each with an incendiary quotation. A few of these taken at random indicate their general trend: "Stop Religious Training in Public Schools;" "Make 'Em Recognize Soviet Russia;" "Down with the Dawes Plan;" "For Shop Committees—for Amalgamation;" "Release the Class War Prisoners;" "Workers' and Farmers' Government in America;" "Stop the Persecution and Deportation of Foreign-born Workers."

Any one who thinks that the Reds are not active in this country has but to read what follows to dispel any such ideas.

To be sure, May Day passed without any serious disturbances in the country. But the mere fact that there are organized bodies that advocate such doctrines as these is sufficient evidence to warrant our taking stock of ourselves now and then, and to put the question "Is America Healthy Enough to Overcome this Poison?"

THE text of the proclamation reads as follows:

"May Day, 1925, finds American imperialism rapidly becoming the dominant force in world affairs. Even Great Britain, once financially supreme, is negotiating a loan in Wall Street.

"The Dawes plan has tied Germany to the House of Morgan and France is strangled by Morgan mortgages.

"In every nook and corner of the capitalist world the agents of American imperialism are extending the rule of their masters.

"In the Pacific the largest fleet of war ever assembled engages in war maneuvers preparatory to a tour of intimidation to the ports of the Far East. War is in the air.

"As a symbol of what imperialism has in store for the workers, two private soldiers, Crouch and Trumbull, are sentenced to 40 and 26 years, respectively, in Hawaii. Their crime is that they formed a Communist League and expressed their solidarity with the workers and peasants of Russia.

"In the United States the coal barons and textile capitalists are making war on the miners and textile workers. The coal barons have announced that they will not be bound by the agreement with the union, the textile kings are slashing the wages of their employes.

"The Coolidge government is the instrument of the industrial lords.

"Criminal syndicalism laws are on the statute books of 28 states. In Michigan, Idaho, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California and New York, the workers are jailed and indicted under criminal syndicalism and deportation laws. The persecution of the foreign-born workers continues, with an army of spies preying upon them. Hangings, burnings at the stake, beatings and denial of the few privileges extended to other citizens are the lot of the negro masses.

"In Europe the murder régimes—the military governments supported by allied finance and bayonets—slaughter workers by the wholesale, as in Bulgaria, Esthonia, Lithuania, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

"In the colonial countries the masses groan under the oppressions of imperialism.

"Everywhere rages the war on the working class except in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, where capitalism and the capitalists have been beaten and the workers' and farmers' government exists.

"The Workers' (Communist) Party of America calls on the workers and exploited farmers of America to celebrate this May Day, the international mass holiday, in the spirit of Leninism—to organize for the fight against wage cuts, against any lowering of their living standards, against the robbery by the bankers and capitalists, against the persecution of revolutionary workers.

It calls upon the masses to fight the Dawes plan and its scheme of international slavery. To fight the white terror against the struggling workers and farmers of Europe, Africa and Asia. To fight against the enslavement of Mexico, the Philippines and Latin America to Wall Street. To fight for the release of Crouch and Trumbull.

"To work for world trade union unity with the Russian and British workers.

"To join the ranks of the millions of workers and farmers who are struggling for freedom from world capitalism under the leadership of the Communist International.

"It urges the workers and farmers to join the Workers (Communist) Party—the revolutionary section of the American working class.

"Only through revolutionary struggle can capitalism be abolished and the slavery of the workers banished forever by the proletarian dictatorship.

"Long live the union of the workers, farmers and colonial peoples!

"Long live the workers' and farmers' government!

"Long live the Communist International!"

(Signed) Central Executive Committee, Workers (Communist) Party of America.

National Executive Committee Young Workers' League of America."

UNFORTUNATELY some of their charges are true—quite a good many if you allow for exaggeration and sensationalism. That is why the Reds are seriously dangerous. We may not approve their methods and we may suspect that the movement is animated less by philanthropic motives than by the desire of a comparative few to transfer into their own hands the autocratic and despotic power they claim is now in the hands of another few. Certainly the present despotism and militarism in Soviet Russia lends color to our doubts. But we can not blink the fact that our "civilization" is in dire need of reform.

The cure for Bolshevism is neither contempt for its power nor petty persecution of its efforts. The only possible cure for it is correction of the evils it capitalizes into its propaganda.

And the only possible way of curing those evils, lawfully and lastingly, is by proper, systematic, fundamental education of the people in civic morality. There is now no such education worthy of the name. You can not build a solid house out of rotten bricks, nor a solid government out of rotten citizens.

And, like it or not, we *are* rotten citizens. So rotten that what we most need by way of education in citizenship is the teaching that graft is not only crime but treason. If we start educating, not with pretty maxims and noble but very general precepts, but with the practical battle-cry of "Down with Graft!" we'll get somewhere.

When I began advocating systematic education in citizenship over fifteen years ago I was considered an entirely harmless but extremely silly idealist. Times have changed. On all sides you begin to hear suggestions along this general line. Only the other day President Coolidge stated that a general turning to religion was the only hope of escape from the evils besetting us. He did not state his opinion as to what chance there is of a general turning to religion. He didn't need to.

Most of us know. But there is at least a possibility of a fairly general turning toward some kind of effort to improve our rotten citizenship by a systematic campaign against graft and civic dishonesty in general. If President Coolidge had seen and mentioned this possibility he would have spoken more to the practical point and might have been the one to give the movement its first real impetus.

If no such movement develops, then we deserve what the Reds give us. And will make it possible for them to give it.

Alarmist? Yes? Well, consider the progress made by the Reds in less than ten years—thanks largely to those who merely cried "Alarmist" instead of doing something. Consider just how serious a problem they have become in England and in most countries of continental Europe. Consider their very appreciable and growing foothold in this country. And then dismiss it all with a bland remark of "Alarmist" if you can.

Incidentally, you might consider the intelligence, condition of financial servitude and probable future of a United States Government that refuses to recognize Soviet Russia or to admit any of its propagandists yet throws wide open the door to any Soviet representative whom the propagandist Soviet government equips with credentials claiming that he comes to buy American goods.

A LETTER, written back in 1921 from Camp-Fire's cache. The man who wrote it asks what he is. I think we can agree among ourselves that he is at least a particularly welcome comrade at the Fire.

Chicago.

Here I have been warming up around Camp-Fire for about six years and I have not opened my mouth for a single word. Surely you won't object to a word or two from me.

I would like for some of you old-timers to tell me if I am an adventurer or if I am just kidding myself.

I RAN away from home when I was twelve years old, to avoid an education. I am now twenty-four. Since leaving home I have traveled over 38 of the States, Mexico, Cuba, Porto Rico, Canada, and did a year in the U. S. Navy during the World War. That year saw me three times in Europe.

I am a printer by trade and my trade is one that serves me a living on a silver tray, wherever I hang my hat.

The reason I think that I may be welcome to your fire is: Traveling with no destination. Sometimes with means, mostly without, is a long, sometimes perilous journey, akin to adventure.

Well, now, perhaps I am, as some of you are thinking, a Hobo. But a Hobo is not always a Bum. A "Bum" seeks a living by arousing the sympathy of his fellowmen to the extent of a "feed and a flop." Then there are the "Bindle Stiff," the "Ganty Dancer," the "Mush Faker," the—ah, lots of human beings who ramble about this good old world to avoid working. I can tell you about every type of tramp that speaks English or Spanish, if you don't know, but I can not impose upon your good nature any longer here.

But, I am a Hobo when the old wanderlust gets a grip on me and I am unable to "pay it out."

God's good old world is a globe of golden, glittering beauty, that is ever being smudged by man's hand, and I am one "among thousands" for whom it holds a fascinating curiosity that must be satisfied, and so I ramble on, and on, with a frown, a smile and song, sometimes up and sometimes down. But always there is a big warm spot in my heart for the "Reader, the Writer and the Adventurer," and "you can get anything I've got."

Tell me, old-timer, what am I?—JOHN K. CHRISTIAN.

* * *

BECAUSE it would betray the ending of his complete novelette in this issue if heard at this meeting of Camp-Fire, a letter from T. S. Stribling will be saved until our next meeting. The ending of this tale is decidedly "Off the Trail" for our magazine; in his letter he gives us the ending as the story was first written and humorously explains why he changed to the present one. Also he makes proper gestures to Booth Tarkington and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

* * *

THE day after this writing Gordon Young's serial, "Days of 'Forty-Nine," will be issued in book form, under the same title, by the George H. Doran Co. The same house recently published another book of Mr. Young's, "Siebert of the Island," a story our magazine had to forego because of too much woman interest for our purposes.

ANY others who know the big woods of Lapland? So far as I can remember none of you has spoken of having been there.

Baden-Baden, Germany.

After having adventured in the big woods of Lapland with rifle and canoe, I am wanting to send some friendly salutes to Camp-Fire. I guess I am the first who erected the *Adventure* badge on the shores of Tnari Lake. Now I am returning home. It was the Camp-Fire spirit who caused me to adventure in big and wild woods. If any one of the *A.* gang was in these territories I would be glad to hear anything of him. With friendly salutes.—WERNER NETTELHORST.

* * *

PENNANTS bearing the Camp-Fire symbol are on hand and can be obtained by any one who will send twenty-five cents plus the necessary postage.

The cost is about five cents for postage to anywhere in the United States, and ten cents elsewhere.

Address "Camp-Fire Stations," care of *Adventure*.

* * *

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.
209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
285—Yuma. W. P. Kline, 4th Ave. & 8th St.
Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley. L. F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.
210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.
231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.
251—Williams. Joe Lanouette, Opera Pool Hall.
252—Fresno. Mrs. Harriet Church, Echo Gardens; 712 Echo Ave.
257—San Francisco. K. F. Richards, 1807 Post St.
266—Santa Barbara. E. Chester Roberts, 714 State St.
273—Los Angeles. Henry M. Harrod, 6615 So. Main St.
286—Sacramento. Carl W. La Force, 2329 Eye St.
287—Stockton. Ivan J. Dill, 520 E. Washington St.
298—La Mesa. Alan Wanbough, 343 Spring Street.
310—Cajon Pass. Richard Hall; Hall's Auto Camp.
312—San Diego. Frank H. Huston, 2966 California St.
321—Banning. William Daustin, P. O. Box 36.
Colorado—105—Grand Junction, Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.
267—Sugar Loaf. Frank Earnest.
279—Denver. De Forrest E. Hall, 2838 Arapahoe St.
Connecticut—142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.
Delaware—232—Delmar. J. A. Aniba, Stone House Hotel.
D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N.E.
Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
138—St. Petersburg. Miss Maude V. Hughson, 2402 First Ave. So.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call*.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
258—Jacksonville. T. J. Eppes, The Hobby Shop.
262—Wildwood. E. M. Dilly, L. B. 114.
285—Tampa. R. Stuart Murray, Mezzanine Floor, Hillsboro Hotel.
288—Orlando. O. D. Young, 112 Court St.
318—Chipley. Jack H. Shivers, P. O. Box 53, Along the Old Spanish Trail.
322—New Pomona. Ed. N. Clark. Putnam District Progress.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.
289—Monticello. O. E. Wells.
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Illinois—66—Chester. Capt. W. B. Barter.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
189—Chicago. Herman A. Schell, 8708 Vincennes Ave.
213—Chicago. Pietro Ferraro, 1007 S. Peoria St.
237—Chicago. Wm. Churchill, 6541 S. State St.
253—Chicago. G. C. Huebner, 2608 Magnolia Ave.
290—Gibson City. J. D. Ashley, 117 Sangamon Ave.
303—Chicago. Leslie C. Marshall, 9155 Normal Blvd.
312—Paxton. Oscar Olson.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.
287—Vincennes. John C. Maloney, 1004 N. Seventh St.
Iowa—238—Atlantic. George Woodbury, 5 E. Third St.
Kansas—228—Leavenworth. Ben H. Lukenbill, 315 Shawnee St.
Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.
190—Louisville. H. S. Summers, 421 W. Jefferson St.
Louisiana—140—New Orleans. J. D. Montgomery, Navy Recruiting Office.
228—St. Rose. C. M. Elfer.
Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.
243—Winthrop. O. A. Abbot.
320—East Sullivan. H. B. Stanwood.
Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St., at Asquith.
82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer, Frederick St.
Massachusetts—56—Watertown Arsenal. E. Worth Benson, Station Hospital.
274—Everett. Aubrey S. McLellan, 4 Marion Place.
Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1121 Turner Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsythia, R. F. D. No. 3.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—St. Cloud. F. T. Tracy, 502 6th Ave. South.
299—Minneapolis. Russell Hearne, 411 First Ave. N.
311—Canby. Joe Millard, Minnesota State Fair.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Tunica Plumbing & Electric Shop.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
268—Pascagoula. C. E. Walter, 239 Orange St.
Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmea C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
289—Nevada. T. St. Hope, 705 N. Clay St.
Montana—240—Fort Missoula. Company C, 4th Infantry.
254—Hamilton. Mrs. Lucy Hyde, 64 N. Second St.
288—Anaconda. R. T. Newman.
Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.
214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.
New Hampshire—316—Concord. R. E. Colby, 81 N. Main St.
319—Clairmont. Frank H. Moose, Box 25.
New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.
203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.
229—Santa Fé. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.
290—Santa Fé. Ralph E. Pierson.
New Jersey—91—Tenafly. Doc Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.
164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.
244—East Orange. Alfred C. Swenson, 77 Lawton St.
245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.
260—Camden. Benj. P. Thomas, 2791 Constitution Rd.
269—South Orange. Eugene Connett, 170 Turrel Ave.
275—Camden. Captain Herbert George Sparrow, Ship No. 1269 Naval Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Armory of Second Battalion, Naval Militia of New Jersey, Temple Theater Building, 415 Market St.
314—Jersey City. C. Dieze, Follansbee's Rest, Inc.
New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
215—Yonkers. George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St.
226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop; Albany Post Road, Dutchess Co.
230—New York City. Fred G. Taylor, 424 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry.
233—Albany. R. N. Bradley, 84 Livingston Ave.
239—Valley Stream, Long Island. Arthur Borchmann, Centarlane.
298—Walton. S. K. Sherman.
311—Brooklyn. Harry A. Odell, 4 Lafayette Ave.
314—Binghamton. Harold E. Snedeker, 41 Riverside St.
North Carolina—92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.
133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.
315—Charlotte. Coverse Harwell, P. O. Box 1368.
North Dakota—206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.
Ohio—52—Uhrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
63—Uhrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.

75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
241—Cincinnati. D. W. Davidson, 1414 Vine St.
242—Bellefontaine. Harry E. Edselle, 328 Plumvalley St.
263—Toledo. F. P. Carey, Box 143, Station A.
264—Toledo. S. G. La Plante, 1820 Dunham St.
291—Ravenna. McGraw and Eckler.
292—Oberlin. E. A. Sherrill, Sherrill Acres, Chicago-Buffalo Highway State Route No. 2.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
313—Oregon. F. L. Buker, Waldpart.
225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.
234—Blackwell. H. W. Willis, 204½ N. Main St.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
286—Portland. W. C. Chapman, 24 Union Ave.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 267 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3030 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 929 N. 41st St.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
247—Pittsburgh. J. F. Lichtenhaer, 224 Swope St.
248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St.; Wissahickon.
261—Shippensberg. *The Chronicle*, 12 South Earl St.
312—Athens. Thomas L. Stalford, The Hiker (Spanish War Hdqts.), 112 N. Main St.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press.*
270—Centerville. C. H. Hornbeck, *The Centerville Journal.*
South Carolina—97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.
217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
293—Florence. S. B. Stacey.
Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.
Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R. No. 6 Box 73.
271—Harlingon. H. C. Jennings, Box 324.
280—Reese. L. H. Baker.
294—Coleman. Clyde Ransberger.
300—Pecos. Oram Green, Third and Cedar Sts.
310—El Paso. H. B. Stout, 1114 North Copia St.
316—Novice. J. Bab Lewis, Cashier, Novice State Bank.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, P. O. Box 26.
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.
Washington—1—Ione. Evan Morgan, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. P. O.
281—Warm Beach. Paul E. Vollum and Kirkham Evans, Evans Bldg.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.
299—Fairmount. Dr. J. W. Ballard, 314 Main St.
317—Clarksburg. W. G. Hamrick, 117 Short St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
Alaska—295—Ketchikan. Thwaites Photo Shop, Ingersoll Hotel Bldg., Front St.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Wolwoling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
282—Ryricton, Victoria. Thomas T. Winter, care of Post Office.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Nosman, Newtown.
278—Belgrave, Victoria. Raymond Paule, Carn Bre, Old Monbulk Road.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.
British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.
Canada—31—Howe Sound, B. C. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto, Ontario. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly.*
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, The Carleton Hotel, 216 Notre Dame Avenue.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
102—Amherst, Nova Scotia. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
249—Fallowfield, Ontario. Ernest Armstrong.
250—Sault Ste. Marie. James McDonald, 504 Queen St. E.
276—Skyland, Page Co., Va. N. Mackintosh.
277—Barrie, Ontario. R. F. Smith.
300—Halifax, N. S. Audler S. Lee, 551Gottingen St.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de Amiraute.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominquez, 7 Cerro.
England—296—Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. William Berry, 19 Weston Place, off Heathcote Road.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Germany—283—Dusseldorf. Hans Derrick Hulsmann, care R. A. Visser & Co.
Guatamala—315—Puerto Barrios. John R. Strange, United Fruit Co.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
272—Honolulu, Hawaii. Hubert T. Miller, Room 4, Silent Hotel.
Honduras, C. A.—70—La Ceiba. Jos. Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona.* Elmer E. McLean.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Nova Scotia—297—Dartmouth. W. E. Sievert, Portland St.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
Virgin Islands—301—St. Thomas. Joseph Reynolds; The Grand Hotel.

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Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

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4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
14—18. Asia. In Five Parts
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36—38. South America. In Three Parts
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N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
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Standing Information

Portage

ONE of the principal problems of a boat trip in The Middle West.

Request:—"I have been planning a trip down the Mississippi for some time and as I have never been on any part of it I would like to ask you a few questions:

The trip has been planned to start from here (New York) to the Great Lakes, through the Lakes into the Mississippi. I know the route as far as the Great Lakes, but there are several ways from there on. I was told of a way from Lake Michigan into Green Bay, Fox River, Lake Winnebago and the canal into the Wisconsin River through the city of Portage.

All I can find out is that the Wisconsin River is navigable as far as Portage. If this way is possible it will just suit me as I want to hit the big river as high as possible. Do you know anything about the route?

Do you know if there is a list of all the canals of the U. S. published?

Where can one obtain charts of the rivers and inland lakes of the U. S.?

The boat we will use will be of about three foot draft and has been used several years around salt water.

I guess there is enough dope in this so you can figure out what I want."—B. W. BUDD, Great Falls, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Zerr:—In regards to the Fox and Wisconsin, including the Wolf Rivers, the following might be of interest: The Fox River, emptying into Green Bay, and the Wisconsin River flowing to the Mississippi River, are separated at Portage, Wis., by a distance of only two miles, and a canal across the divide affords a connection between the two streams. The entire distance from Green Bay to the Mississippi River by way of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers is 281 miles; the maximum draft is limited at low water by depths on the Wisconsin; soundings, September 4, 1896, showed a depth of 2 feet on the bars near its mouth. This has been improved since. High water periods on the upper Fox River continue for about two months on the average, beginning the latter part of March and extending into May. The low water periods on the upper stream average about 40 days, starting early in July and extending into September.

The distance from Green Bay via the Fox River to Portage on the Wisconsin is 163 miles. The rise from low water datum in Green Bay to the low water level on Lake Winnebago at Menasha (crest of dam), thirty-seven miles is about 167.1 feet; there are seventeen locks (also a guard lock) on this section, with minimum available length of 136.4 feet for vessels with square bow and 144 feet for vessels with model bow, minimum available width of thirty-five feet, and minimum depth over breast walls of six feet at standard low water. From Menasha lock through Lake Winnebago to Portage City, 107 miles, the rise is about 37.2 feet between the crest of Menasha dam and mean low water in the Wisconsin River at Portage. There are nine locks in this section, with minimum available length of 137 feet.

I have never heard of charts of any rivers in the U. S., except those of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. These charts are so many to each stream that they would cost upwards of $75 for the entire length.

Although you did not ask regarding the Mississippi River, it would be well to remember that on the upper Mississippi you will have to run the center of the channel on account of the many fences in the river to keep the river in the center, or else you will be high and dry before you know it. Below St. Louis you should follow the bends of the stream, that is along the shore, on account of the wide and deep places, fifty and more feet being recorded.

This will be some trip and hope you will have luck. Should you want more data, write again.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Panama Lottery

$75,000 and a new dress.

Request:—"Can you tell me something about the old Panama Lottery method of operation? I have never found any account of it in any magazines."—MRS. A. LORD, Los Gatos, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Emerson:—Yes. It happens that I can tell you about the Lottery as it used to be handled.

The Panama Lottery tickets were composed of five pieces which were perforated so that either one portion could be sold or one could purchase the full ticket of five pieces. These were sold by some of the old women and other agents during the week, who received a commission of 5% for selling them. One portion of a ticket entitled the holder to a fifth of the grand prize and the full ticket entitled to all of it, if one was lucky enough to have the winning number.

To get the full prize one must have all the numbers of the drawing, *e.g.*, should 65,921 be the number drawn, the holder or holders of this ticket receive the grand prize, which (in Panama) was usually $25,000 for usual Sundays, and $50,000 and $75,000 for national holidays, etc. The four ending numbers, 5921, would receive a big slice, 921 a smaller, 21 still smaller, and for the ending number 1 you would get your money back. Thus you would have four other chances of making something other than by winning the big prize.

The ticket selling was finished Saturday night, and all unsold tickets were returned and held by the lottery company, which every now and then would win the prize itself. A certain portion of the numbers are donated each week to the Catholic church, certain charities, etc. The drawing was done at 10 A.M. in a small building just off the plaza in Panama city, and this is how it was done:—

The numbers were lying in a rack facing the audience, and when the men began to pick them up and screw them together it was noticed that they were shaped like an egg sawed in two, only the egg was solid and of some white substance like ivory or celluloid, with the number printed on the flat end.

The other end was screwed down over this and thus formed a round white ball or egg. As these were closed they were tossed into a large wire basket, and when this basket was full it was rotated by a crank handle until the numbers were well mixed. There are six of each kind (so that 555,555 or any similar number could be drawn).

A little girl about four years of age was selected and stood upon the table and she would reach into the basket and draw forth a number. This was opened and put up as the first number. The basket was then closed and again whirled, then the girl drew another number, and the process was so continued to the finish.

A different child is chosen for each Sunday's drawing, and she receives a new dress for her work.

The Panama Lottery was owned by a man named Duque, but don't know who (if any one) is running it now.

In watching this drawing several times, never saw them draw so few as three numbers to make the decision; but always drew the full number, although sometimes the first three might be 000.

If there are any other questions relative to this, I will try and answer them.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Lost Missions

SOMEWHERE in the sand dunes of Sonora.

Request:—"As an *Adventure* reader, and once an *Adventure* writer, I am writing to ask if you know anything regarding the legend of a lost mission somewhere in the sand dunes of northwestern Sonora. Of course I know that it is only a legend but I am interested in it just the same. Perhaps you could refer me to some volume that would throw light on the subject."—ERNEST DOUGLAS.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The history of Sonora is linked with the history of its mines, for the search for minerals brought the gold greedy Spanish hither. Searching for the gold naturally brought up the question as how to hold the country for themselves. In this way the start was made in having missions scattered all over the country; wherever the soldiers went the priests followed. Then began the work of converting the Indians.

Many missions were built in Mexico in the 17th Century and the early part of the 18th. Many of these old missions are still standing. Many of the zealous padres of the 17th Century worked the mines solely for funds with which to build churches and missions. The missions in the more inaccessible districts are excellent specimens of early Spanish missions in New Spain. Unusually interesting ones are those at Onabas, Baroyeca and Tecoripa. The Baroyeca church owes its existence to the discovery in 1792 of a rich bonanza in the Minas Grande, of the Baroyeca Mountains.

The greater part of the proceeds from the mine were used to build this edifice. Though now in a ruinous state, one of the main halls still measures over 150 feet long and 5 feet thick. The word *Fortis,* all that remains of a Latin inscription, is cut deep into the masonry. Around one of the bells is the inscription Maria Purisima de Loreto. The upper part bears the date Marzo 16 de 1646.

The church is in the form of a Latin Cross, with a hugh nave and transepts. Adjoining it are roomy chapels, refectories, and dormitories. It was used as a fortress when the miners and priests were beseiged by the Indians. Prior to 1850 the walls were covered with silver, the product of the famous mine. The sacred altar vessels were of pure gold, and the candelabra, the altar railing and parts of the sanctuary of silver.

A good history of Mexico is by Prescott; also another one by Hubert Howe Bancroft. The chief events in the History of Mexico from the time of the Conquest up to 1887 will be found in this book, and, with Prescott's "Conquest," will give the gist of many histories.

I know of no "Lost Mission" and have not been able to find any mention of one. There have been several "Lost Mines" in Mexico also but many of these have been found. Come again some time.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Newfoundland

AUTOMOBILING in Avalon.

Request:—"I hope you won't mind my taking a little of your time to ask you some questions about Newfoundland.

Is it possible in the summer season to make an automobile tour of Newfoundland? What route would you suggest to see the most of the island in, say, a week or ten days? Are automobiles taken from North Sydney to Port aux Basques or are they usually landed at some other port? Any difficulty in passing customs? Is gasoline readily obtainable on the island or is it rather scarce? About what is its average price per Imperial gallon? Could you give me an idea of the cost to get an automobile from North Sydney to Newfoundland?

Are there many flies and mosquitoes in the brush during the summer? About what would be the best time to avoid them, in your opinion?

What is the cost of a non-resident fishing license? Does this entitle one to fish in any waters of the island and for any kind of fish?

Is there quite a bit of virgin forest on the island or is most of it cut-over or brulé land? About what is the general topography of the island. Is it something like northern Ontario, in Canada—hills and lakes, bogs and streams, in continual succession? Are there many flowers or berries in the summer? Your answers to the above will be appreciated." —C. FOSTER CLARK, Detroit, Michigan.

Reply, by Mr. C. T. James:—The only automobile highways so far built in the island are on the peninsula of Avalon, intersected and formed by Trinity, Conception, Trepassey, St. Mary's and Placentia bays. These highways are well built and the scenery along them offers a high-class attraction to visiting tourists, but it would not be advisable, just yet, for any prospective tourist or casual visitor to bring his own motor car. After the Highroads Commission completes its work of road construction it may be an advantage to do so for any persons who desire to cover the whole peninsula.

So far there have not been any cars brought across Cabot Strait from North Sydney to Port-aux-Basques, as there are no automobile roads on the west coast suitable for vehicular traffic.

The customs facilitate entry of all classes of tourists at either Port-aux-Basques, Humbermouth or St. John's, only exacting import duties, as per tariff, upon such articles as are consumed by visitors, viz: tobacco, groceries and items of camp outfit. The bringing in of spirits is absolutely prohibited, the Government having a monopoly on such.

A deposit on cars, cameras, fishing-rods and rifles is exacted upon entry, the same being refunded to depositor on production of said article and original certificate on leaving the country.

Gasoline is easily procurable, the average price for high grade being about 45 cents per Imperial gallon.

Can not furnish estimate of freight rates on cars. You had better make application to steamship agents of Red Cross Line at New York: Furness Withy Co. at Boston and to agent of Newfoundland Government railway at North Sydney, N. S. The usual quota of flies and mosquitoes are to be found and felt during the warm season, June, July and August, but all chemists advertise anti-fly dope as well in Newfoundland as United States. But bring your own if you have any doubt.

Non-resident fishing licenses are issued at a cost of ten dollars per rod at first port of entry, and possessor may fish any and all inland streams and rivers on same, subject to the regulations of the Inland Game and Fisheries Board. Salt-water fishing may be indulged in without purchasing a license.

Some virgin forest is still immune from the blaze of the timber cruiser, but it is in very out-of-the-way sections. Lakes, streams and marshes are in continuous succession, and one can make a canoe trip for many miles up country from the Humber River, Bay of Islands, without difficulty but with an experienced guide.

Flowers and edible berries are in great variety. To define their particular color and taste would be superfluous. One must gather them in bloom and ripening season to appreciate their value.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

East Indies

A THEY knew what they wanted.

Request:—"As you are the 'Ask *Adventure*' expert on the East Indies, I am writing you for information on that part ot the world. I will greatly appreciate anything you may deem advisable for one to know before beginning to carry out the below tentative plans.

There are two of us, young men of twenty-two and twenty-three years of age, both accustomed to knocking about here and there, thoroughly able to take care of ourselves, and both having a fairly good idea what to expect of life, and what not to try and get. We have traveled to some extent, visiting parts of Central and South America, covered most of the United States, Canada and Alaska, and lately have visited several groups of islands in the South Seas. We have decided that since we are somewhat acquainted in our own part of the world, the next place to go is to the Orient. Here are our tentative plans:

Leave the United States (San Francisco) about January first, nineteen twenty seven for Singapore. We will go via one of the steamship lines calling at that port. If need be we will change at any point necessary for reaching there. We intend to travel either second or third class cabin. Although we both come from fairly prominent homes, socially, we have been away from them long enough that we are thoroughly used to roughing it, and leaving out most of the luxuries. When we leave San Francisco, we will go with the intention of not returning within at least three years. The reason we choose Singapore as our destination is that it seems to be the natural gate city to the Indies, and the best vantage point to reach and look around.

NOW for the information:

What are the chances of employment? It is our aim to get some sort of a position, in Singapore or elsewhere. We are both well experienced in general office work, and have worked outdoors, also. It makes no difference what the job was, if it helped defray a few of the expenses, we would be willing to try it for a while, at least until something turned up. Have heard that once in a while a billet as assistant manager of a plantation turns up, and although we would be more than satisfied with that kind of a position, we realize that it would be only by a lucky chance if we struck anything like that.

In the various different places where we have been, I have noticed that it is the man on the premises that gets the job. Although it is well known that there is no employment in the South Seas, yet in all the islands where I have been it has been fairly easy to land a position, just from the fact that I was on the island at the time.

At one place, I worked in an office where it was my work to answer many letters from people in the United States, who wrote asking information concerning employment. To all I was forced to write advising them to stay away from the islands if they would come counting on work, for there was none. Yet just the same, I could have named several positions although mediocre, that paid enough to defray all expenses at the time, even though not enough by any means to warrant anyone coming from the States to fill.

Is it not the same in Singapore and the islands of the Indies? We are not looking for employment where we will get rich overnight or where we may make our fortunes. All we would want is enough work to defray the expenses, not to make a fortune, although it must be understood that should chance happen that way we are human; we would not refuse it.

At Suva, Fiji, last year, we met some people who own and operate a large plantation (rubber) near Padang, Sumatra. From them we learned much of plantation life in Sumatra, and it was from them that we got the idea of going to the East Indies on our next trip from the United States. Although these people that we knew in Fiji are back in Sumatra, we hesitate to (in fact, absolutely will not) ask or call upon friendship for a position. We want to work for what we get, and earn it by our own efforts. One of the men did give us a letter of introduction to a planter friend of his at Soerabaya, Java, but unless you say that this is a good section to go into, we may not get that far south.

FROM everything that we can learn, and from our own experience in foreign countries, living expenses will be much higher by far than in the United States. It is only natural to believe that. But the question arises, how much higher is the price on the average? For everything, foodstuffs, wearing apparel, traveling costs, hotel expenses, general expenses, etc.?

What articles of wearing apparel and equipment should we buy in San Francisco and take out with us? From our experience in the tropics, we believe that it would be best to take only light shirts, white trousers, light underclothing, a hat or two, perhaps a sun helmet, a raincoat, and shoes. But the question is, how much of each item should we take? In our belief, shoes are the main part of wearing apparel in any country. What kind is especially adapted for wear in the place where we are going?

Although we would like to travel as light as possible, we will not sacrifice baggage on the way for comfort and less money after getting there. We especially desire a list of just what is desirable to take and the amount of each item for each of us. We will probably take one steamer trunk and two suitcases apiece. This we can increase or decrease—but we will follow your recommendations.

Lastly, *sufficient funds.* We will leave San Francisco with at least one thousand dollars each (by all means, not less). By traveling and living without the greatest amount of luxuries, and using discretion in the matter of expenditures, do you think that this amount will be sufficient? Considering the many times where we have been able to 'get by' with much less, a thousand dollars seems a large amount of money.

We are counting on getting some sort of employment, but still we will keep a reserve fund, in case, we are unable to locate a position to help defray expenses at least, we will have plenty of cash to get a return ticket to the United States.

Out of a thousand dollars we feel that whether we locate employment or not, we will get a few hundred dollars' worth of experience, and the few hundred will be enough to permit us to look around a bit, even though we will have to forego the idea of staying out three full years.

Any advice or information concerning any of the above, and anything else that you may think desirable for us to know, will be greatly appreciated."—J. F. S., Pago Pago, Samoa.

Reply, by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—I was right glad to get your letter, since you know what you want and you have a good idea of the conditions you are likely to meet. I get so many inquiries from fatheads who say that they are American, have two good hands and aren't afraid of any kind of work; and therefore expect that all the rest of the world is waiting to welcome them with open arms.

I always have to tell them that there are some four hundred million Chinamen and some three hundred and thirty million East Indians who can do everything that they can do and who are willing to do it for twelve hours a day at one-tenth of the pay that an American must have.

It is not complimentary to us, but it is a fact that, except for expert technical jobs, an American is the last man whom anybody else wants to employ; for the reason that we are accustomed to working for less hours and for more money than anybody else.

To meet your own case. I agree with you that the man on the spot lands the job. But you must be prepared to find that the jobs available in the East are not so many as in the Americas and in the Islands. What I mean is that, while there are millions of jobs, the natives of the East are not savages, and are very well able to fill nearly every kind of job that you can think of.

GENERAL office work, you say you have experience in. I am not saying that you can not land such a job in Singapore or in Rangoon or Calcutta; but you must bear in mind that all those places are flooded out with Bengali Babus who do general office work with machine-like precision for about forty dollars a month. The fact that you are a white man will militate against you in the East for the reason that, while you may be starving and willing to take on a job at the same pay as the Babu, no employer will give you such a job because the white man's prestige *must* be kept up and a white man can not be given a job working alongside of the native on the same terms.

The only jobs open to you will be such as in which you can supervise natives; and such jobs are, of course, not flying around loose.

Plantation jobs are to be had sometimes. Rubber or tea or cinnamon plantations require white men to oversee the natives. But such jobs are very much sought after for the simple reason that they call for no technical training to start with. However, I would be the last man to say they were not to be obtained by the outsider, because I got such a job myself once.

I would sum up by saying that the East is the hardest place in the world for a white man to pick up a job. Yet it can be done; and in the case of men like yourself and your friend who have a grubstake of a thousand dollars apiece to keep alive on I would say, go ahead, and I envy you the glorious adventure of it.

I did it myself when I was your age; and the only thing that I regret about it is that it took me much longer to get out of the East than I had expected it would. Six years was I stuck in and around those parts; and five of them were too many. In your case, I gather that, if you go frightfully busted, you can cable for a small stake from home to move on to the next port. Hop to it, then; and I hope you like it better than I did.

As to expense of living. From where do you get the idea that it will be much more expensive than in the United States? *Vs se equivoca, amigo.* In Singapore or Rangoon or Batavia, or even Calcutta, you will be able to live—that is to say, to find respectable boarding houses—on a hundred dollars a month. Less, if you don't need to make a splurge.

OUTFIT. My advice is flat and without hesitation. Take nothing with you at all. It is an absolute rule that there is no article of equipment manufactured in America that isn't manufactured as well and for less money somewhere else. In Singapore you will find large stores carrying a full line of everything that you can possibly need—from clothing (dungarees or dress suits) to camp goods and guns. They will be British made and duty free and will be what you need for the country there—not what some slick salesman will tell you in San Francisco. Above all, don't ever let anybody sell you a sun hat on the ground that you will need it on board ship before you ever land where you can buy one. One of the few causes of merriment in the drab and dreary East is the "sola topee" that the foreigner brings out.

Don't let anybody fool you into buying a medical kit wherewith to save your lives in the deadly tropics. In Singapore or in Hongkong you will find neat little outfits put up by Burroughs Wellcome. Nice little pills, all labeled and numbered and packed in a leather case. In about six months you ought to learn how to look after yourselves in a climate which will be very different from the tropics of South America.

I think that that is all I can tell you—and I would much like to know, when you have been and seen, how you liked it and just how you found conditions about getting a job.

A two-cent stamp won't carry everywhere.

Alaska

AS COMPARED to New England.

Request:—"Should like very much to get a little information about Alaska. I am a Staff Sergeant, Medical Department, U. S. Army and wish to get a special assignment on my next enlistment, if possible to Alaska. If you can answer at least a part of the following I will certainly appreciate it.

1. Where are the Army posts situated in Alaska?
2. Is it terribly cold on the southern coast or am I right in thinking that the Japanese current makes that a climate about like New England?
3. Would that be a suitable place to take a wife and two children, one child four years old and the other eighteen months?
4. Would the living expenses there be much more than here?
5. Are there any amusements there, such as movies and vaudeville?
6. Is there hunting and fishing there without going a hundred or two miles?
7. Is the country there wooded like New England or even more so, and what kinds?
8. Is wood or coal used as fuel and if coal where is it obtained?

I enclose a stamped addressed envelope and any information that you may be able to give me will be greatly appreciated."—Hugh R. Stevens, Fort Benning, Ga.

Reply, by Mr. Solomons:—Several Army posts, I believe, but the Government does not seem to publish this information in its "General Information regarding the Territory of Alaska," which I have just examined in order to answer your question. I know there was and I suppose still is a post at Nome River, near Nome. Probably at several others, as I say. You can get that dope where you are I presume, if you ask for it in the right quarters.

It is NOT terribly cold on the south coast for the reason you state. It isn't as cold as New England, for in the latter place the Gulf Stream is too far out at sea to do much good. Finest place in the world for a wife and any number of children, no matter how young, IF you have a home for them. Living expense generally less than here, grub, etc., being only a little more and INCIDENTALS being, practically speaking, less, as there are so few things on which you can spend money. In the larger towns there are always many amusements. Fishing is almost uniformly good in Alaska, coast or inland. Hunting depends naturally on how many are near and at it! On the southern coast the country is wooded, mostly, all over the low lands, but the timber line is low on the mountains. Beautiful country, beyond expression, from a scenic point of view. Lots of rain on the south coast. North is largely arid, that is, not much precipitation. Wood is usual fuel. Coal is obtained locally in some places, and imported at the coast towns, especially those in which the wood supply is now scarce. Alaska is a fine country.

Ornithology

A LOS ANGELES bird that sings at four in the morning.

Request:—"Have read *Adventure* since 1912, and have the good luck to be in California now coming from Detroit to S. F. in 1922, and here the first of May. I wonder if you could give me the name of the bird that sings so strong from about 12.30 A.M. to about 4.30 A.M., the darker it is the better he goes, our locality is somewhat suburban.

I feed the birds at 5 A.M. every morning, and they come around regular, but they are only those saucy black birds and sparrows, though I did see one brownish bird, somewhat elongated. These night-birds' notes are like this, 'pretty, pretty, pretty, gimme, gimme, gimme' and others. I am no bird expert, but like them. Pardon for troubling you."—Guy Atwell, Los Angeles, Cal.

Reply, by Mr. Harriman:—Undoubtedly, the bird you mention is a California mocker. Long tail, trim body, shows white on wings when he flies, is always on the alert and inquisitive, hates cats, fights them and emits raucous cries while doing it, feeds on insects and berries, never seems to be sleepy between midnight and sunset, has a scolding note he uses when anything annoys him that sounds as though it came through set teeth. Tail used to balance him on a wire in ludicrous fashion, at times pointing to the zenith, then flipped straight down.

A pair nested at my house on Euclid Hill for eleven years and the male bird sang on top of my chimney every moonlight night. A pair have nested at my present home ten years and they show no fear when I shoot a marauding cat with my .22 W. R. F. special, but look at me and talk about it, then fly down and hit the dead cat.

No trouble at all, Guy. Glad to hear from a lover of birds.

Mexico City

A FINE place to live, if—

Request:—"Could you give me information of the following points?

1. The climate of southern Mexico, all the year round, more especially in the region around Mexico City.
2. Living conditions in the above named city for a man of moderate circumstances. Conditions such as quarters, clothing necessary, whether to be taken or bought while there, social conditions including recreation. By recreation is meant outdoor sports such as riding, hunting etc. Is there club life and social life among residents of foreign nationality? Do foreigners and Mexicans 'mix?'

3. I know that there is a fine museum in Mexico City, but is there a university where courses might be taken in Anthropology and Ethnology (Mexican and Central American) with a view to later field work?

4. Would it be possible to obtain work there such as tutoring or teaching English? If so to whom should I write? What business firms have headquarters in Mexico City? Of course, teaching and business experience are two of my main qualifications but I am not averse to work of any kind.

I have picked out Mexico City because of its museum and the hope that I might further study Ethnology, particularly that which relates to the Mayan and Aztec civilizations and further to pick up the language of Mexico of which I have a smattering plus the ability to read and write it to a limited extent. In order to do this, one must live, hence the last question. I am accustomed to making myself at home wherever I am since I have been wandering around for the last eight years, more especially as a seafaring man, and occasionally bumming through our own country.

I hope I have not swamped you with information asked for. If the subject is too large, send what you can in concentrated form. Enclosed are stamps for reply."—S. C. Eastwood, Culver City, Cal.

Reply, by Mr. Mahaffey:—The climate of Mexico City is temperate, the mean annual temperature being 60° F. There is considerable moisture in winter and during the rainy season, from June to September. The most changeable weather occurs in February. May is the hottest month. During the entire year the early morning is cold, generally falling to about 40 degrees in winter, and sometimes to freezing point. Newcomers should take care to not catch cold upon arriving. The natives have a superstition that the night air is unhealthy and the first thing one sees is the cloths they have over their mouths and noses.

You can get fair to medium room and board in a Mexican boarding house for about $20 to $25 a month, and even cheaper. You should take all your clothes with you, taking care that they are used as they will likely try to collect duty if they seem to be new. There is plenty of what you would call recreation. Of course if you stay in a foreign hotel they will charge you more for the pleasure of the foreign company, but I assume you wish to become acquainted with the people, so you had best associate among the Mexicans, at least partially. You will find foreign clubs in the City of Mexico, all the different nationalities have their clubs. The Jockey Club is the place where most of the mixing takes place. Mixing cocktails, and also the mixing of the Mexicans and those of the foreigners who wish to become acquainted with the local people.

Of course I have a tendency to see Mexico City through my own eyes. I was there several times, but never entered the door of a foreign hotel or club. I rented a room and boarded at a place Calle 5 de Febrero 40, paid 45 pesos a month for room and board, there were a number of Mexican army officers boarded there and through them I became acquainted with some parts of the City. I never in all my experiences in Mexico had any trouble in getting along and feel myself at home beginning at a grass shack in the tropical jungle and winding up with the President's palace. I am quite a mixer myself, and have no doubts but that you or anybody else could do the same, *if you wanted to.*

For a fine description of Mexico City send 5 cents to the Pan-American Union for their booklet "Mexico, the City of Palaces." Mexico City is a fine place to live in, IF you have the wherewithal. The University of Mexico has courses in Ethnology and Anthropology and I am sure you will feel quite at home. There are many experts in those lines among the professors.

As to your getting something to do, to tide you over. NOW we are getting to the middle of the problem. The best thing you can do is to write to the American Chamber of Commerce, Mexico City, for information along these lines. However I hear that there is an overflow of foreigners out of work and this lessens the chances of all concerned. Many Europeans have entered Mexico in the hopes of getting to the U. S. and not being able to do this, they get by the best way they can, although they naturally make it hard for others. Many Americans are also *on the bum*, as they express it.

Generally speaking, Mexico City is all right, the big difficulty is in getting something to do. As in all large places wages are cheap in the city, although there are chances for work in the outside and more remote places. Everybody wants to stay in the city, thus lowering the scale of salaries and wages. As conditions change from time to time, you had better write to the American Chamber of Commerce, and see what kind of a line-up they can give you. I am unable to advise you as to whether you can get a place tutoring or teaching English, for frankly speaking I do not know. I do not wish to deceive you and will only state that this has been and is out of my line entirely. The only way to find out is to try it.

Regulations for entering Mexico require a passport, secured through the U. S. District Court at Los Angeles, costing $10, plus the visé of the Mexican Consul General at Los Angeles, another $10, plus $3 head tax on entering Mexico. You must have $100 on your person, preferably in gold, and take care they do not lift it off you on the train in Mexico, as sneak thieves and pickpockets are thick. A fresh vaccination or vaccination certificate is also required. Married couples MUST have their marriage certificates. No certificate, no going into Mexico. No vaccination, and they will do it for you, *for a consideration.*

Salaries and wages are low in Mexico City. Clerks in large stores get all of $22.50 gold a month. $40 gold a month is a good salary for a good Spanish stenographer. Foreigners get more, however. I got $125 gold a month, house, light and water but that was in Durango. Also during the war, when wages were better than now.

Better get all the dope you can, then if you have the funds to carry you a while, the best thing to do is to try your luck.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address Joseph Cox, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although the department is conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, care *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City.

FROM Reuben Potter, Parris Island, South Carolina, comes the following love song as he heard it sung in Kentucky. I've run across several versions already, and would like to get more of them. Does any one know how old the song is or where it originated?

Old Smokey

(Text of Reuben Potter)

Up on Old Smokey
All covered with snow,
Where I lost my true lover
By courting too slow.

Courting is a pleasure
And parting is a grief,
And a false hearted lover
Is worse than a thief.

‘O it's raining and it's hailing
And the moon don't give no light;
Your horses can't travel
This dark stormy night.

"Go put up your horses
And feed them some hay.
Come, love, sit beside me
As long as I stay."

"My horses ain't hungry,
And they won't eat your hay—
Farewell, my little darling,
I've drive on my way.

"I'll drive down to old Georgia,
There I'll write you my mind.
My mind is to leave you
And ramble all the time.

"Your parents are against me
And mine are the same;
Upon your love letters
Scratch off my name.

"Put them up on Old Smokey
On the mountain so high,
Where the bluebirds and the pretty doves
Can't hear my sad cry."

"As sure as the dew falls
Upon the green corn,
Last night I was with her,
But tonight she is gone."

I'VE already expressed my regret that while the trip lasts I shall probably be unable to send to many of you copies of the songs that you request. If I were where I could get at my books and the masses of manuscript copies that have been sent in to the department, I'd be glad to copy songs and send them, but I shall be unable for a year to get back to my desk.

So I'm going to ask your help more frequently than usual in the matter of running down and sending in copies of songs that I could myself find if I had access to my collection.

Here's the first instalment, a series of fragments sent in by various readers during the past month. Who can give me complete versions, or tell me where the songs or poems can be found?

1.

Hark, sinners, hark, while I relate
What happened in Kentucky state.
A nice young lady late have died,
Falling from all her wealth and pride.

"Come father, mother, sister too,
Now I must bid you all adieu."
They closed her eyes, her nails turned blue
And thus she bade this world adieu.

2. "The Ballad of William Sycamore," one verse of which goes as follows:

There are children lucky from dawn to dusk,
But never a child so lucky,
For I cut my teeth on money musk
On the bloody ground of Kentucky.

3. "The Maid of the Plains," which begins:

There was a fair maiden
Who lived on the plains.
She helped me herd cattle
Through the long dreary rains.
She helped me herd cattle
Through the fall roundup,
And drank the red liquor
From the cruel bitter cup.

4. Another plains song to the tune of "Beulah Land," which begins:

We've reached the land of hills and stones
Where all is strewn with buffalo bones.

and has as chorus:

O buffalo bones, bleached buffalo bones,
I seem to hear your sighs and moans;
I look away across the plains
Where antelopes and gophers remain.

5. A song heard years ago in Staffordshire, England, and probably brought there from America

by the Christy minstrels. It has a yodeling chorus and a few of the verses run as follows:

> By the Mississippi River,
> On the shore, on the shore,
> Where its dark and dismal waters
> Loudly roar, loudly roar.
>
> O give back to me my husband
> But once more, but once more,
> And I'll praise the waves that bear him
> To the shore, to the shore.
>
> Bear him from yon mighty river
> Back again, back again,
> Let me not o'er its stormy billow
> Look in vain, look in vain.

6. "The Chief of the Musgogee," beginning:

> One eye on the eagle's flight,
> The other kept the trail in sight;
> Two ways at once this man could see,
> The noble chief of the Musgogee.

7. A song written shortly after the shooting of President James A. Garfield, partly sung and partly spoken, which began:

> O they tell me Mr. Garfield's dead, Lord, Lord,
> O they tell me Mr. Garfield's dead.

8. "The Old Sow," which goes through with the entire anatomy of the sow by way of question and answer:

> What yer goin' ter do with the old sow's hide?
> Make as good a saddle as yer ever did ride.

9. "Leather Britches," one verse of which is:

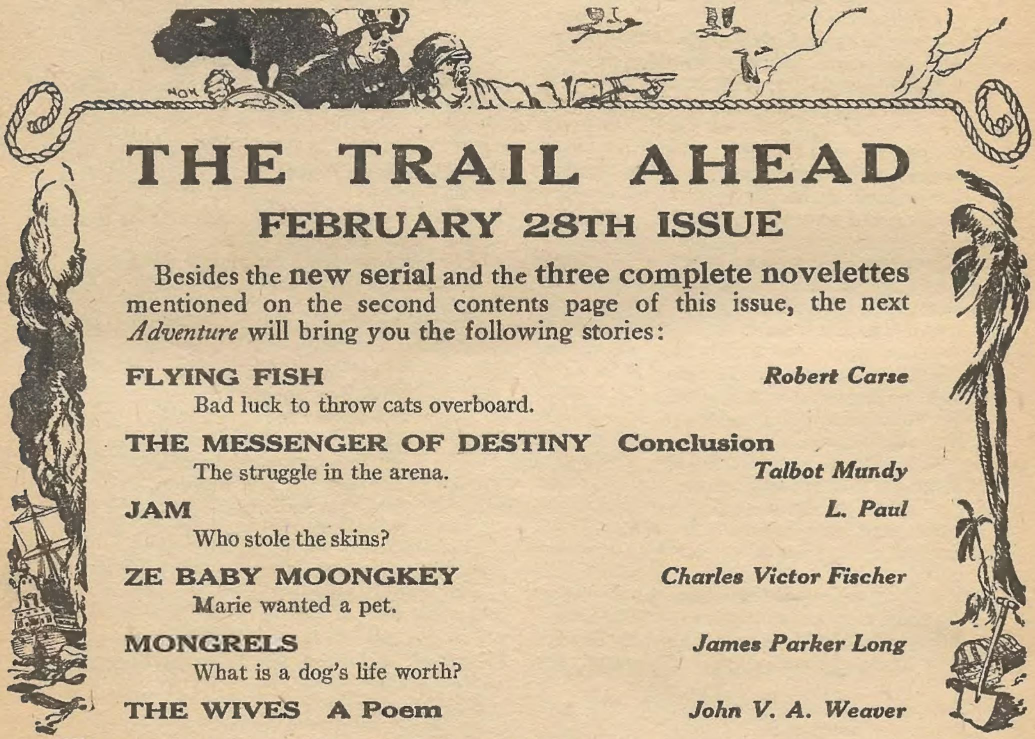
> Leather britches, full of stitches,
> Mamma sewed the buttons on;
> Daddy kicked me out of bed
> Because I had my britches on.

10. Finally a genuine "hobo" song telling of the troubles of "me and my pardner." One verse goes:

> Conductor came out on the train platform,
> Says, "Hello, boes, now what yer doin' on?"
> "Lost my ticket, but it's O my God
> I'll ride yer train if I have ter grab a rod."

THAT'S enough for one time. I don't intend to fill every issue with requests, but I shall have to depend largely upon your help in answering many of the questions that come in to the department while I'm on the trip. There are some photographs taken on the road waiting for any of you who can contribute.

ADDRESS all letters—R. W. Gordon, care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

FEBRUARY 28TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

FLYING FISH ***Robert Carse***
Bad luck to throw cats overboard.

THE MESSENGER OF DESTINY Conclusion ***Talbot Mundy***
The struggle in the arena.

JAM ***L. Paul***
Who stole the skins?

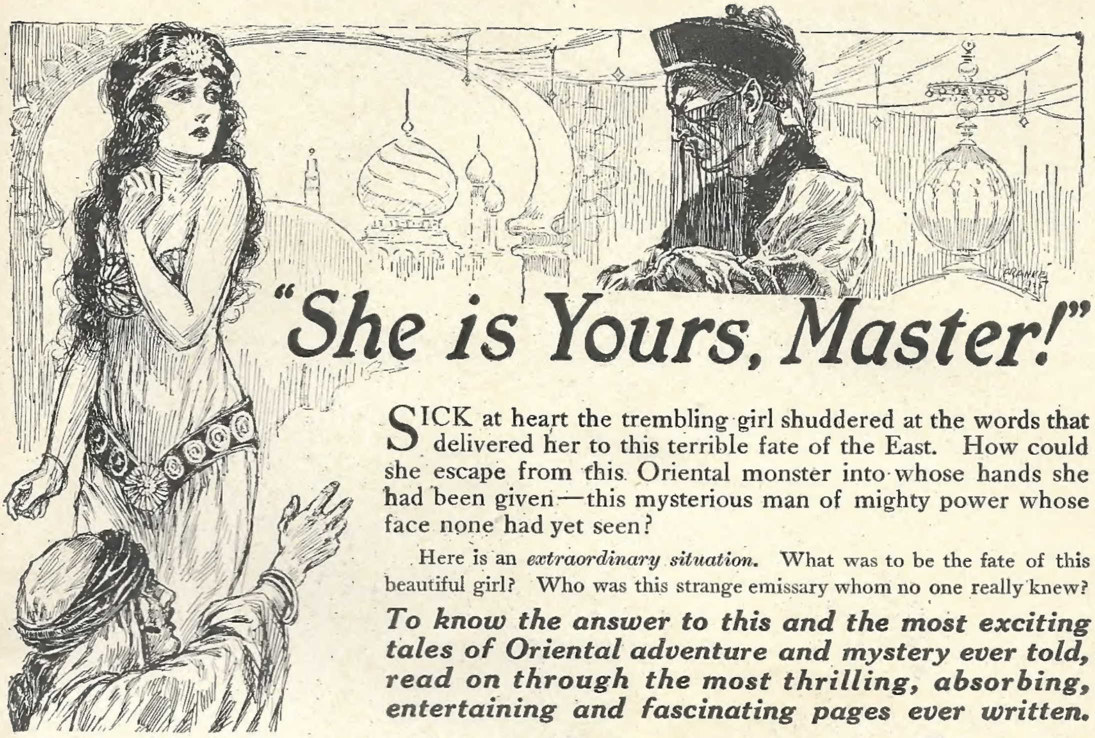
ZE BABY MOONGKEY ***Charles Victor Fischer***
Marie wanted a pet.

MONGRELS ***James Parker Long***
What is a dog's life worth?

THE WIVES A Poem ***John V. A. Weaver***

STILL
FARTHER
AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by W. Townend, Thomson Burtis, S. B. H. Hurst, Leo Walmsley, John Dorman, W. Ryerson Johnson, Arthur O. Friel, and William Byron Mowery; and short stories by L. Patrick Greene, Fiswoode Tarleton, Walter J. Coburn, Robert Carse, George Bruce Marquis, Captain Dingle, Ralph R. Perry, Romaine H. Lowdermilk, Raymond S. Spears, Kenneth Malcolm Murray, T. T. Flynn, Charles Victor Fischer, John Joseph, William Westrup, Post Sargent and others; stories of daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.



"She is Yours, Master!"

SICK at heart the trembling girl shuddered at the words that delivered her to this terrible fate of the East. How could she escape from this Oriental monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power whose face none had yet seen?

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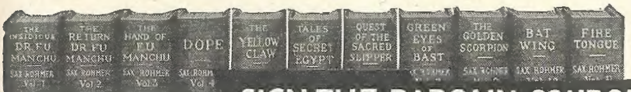
THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU MANCHU SAX ROHMER Vol. 1
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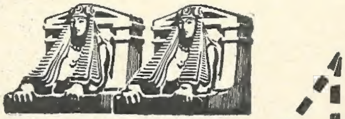

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